Manual of SACRED RHETORIC

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Manual

OF

Sacred Rhetoric;

OR,

How to Prepare a Sermon.

BY

Rev. Bernard Feeney,
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Introduction.

Some hold that Preaching is not an art. "All your rules of rhetoric, sacred and profane," they say, "are comprised in the good old American maxim: Fill yourself full of your subject, as though you were a barrel; take out the bung; and let nature caper."

It is hardly credible that such advice could be given or taken seriously. Yet men, unlikely to make a jest of sacred things, have been known to give it; and sermons heard occasionally in our pulpits prove that it is sometimes followed in practice. Nay, often the practice improves on the advice, and dispenses altogether with the "filling up" process.

There must be art in the doing of any work in which complex means have to be employed to do it well; for art is the skillful use of such means, whether the work be a kitchen table or an epic poem. Now,

Preaching relying on divine help, undertakes a very difficult and complicated work, namely, to move the will of another from a state of apathy or opposition to activity in a definite direction. To do this, several means have to be employed: obstacles and prepossessions have to be removed; interest has to be awakened; the intellect has to be enlightened by exposition and illustration; the feelings have to be aroused and enlisted; the will itself has to be brought under the direct influence of motives calculated to determine it to action. Each of these means has to be wisely regulated by laws taken from the highest achievements of oratory and based on the principles of human thought and conduct. Hence, the necessity of an art of Sacred Rhetoric, to acquire knowledge of those laws and skill in their application.

"Apostolic Preaching" is often spoken of as the ideal form of announcing the divine Word; and because the Apostles are not credited with a knowledge of rhetoric, their preaching is supposed to have been crude and unartistic. From this it is inferred that unstudied, unarranged discourse, when

prompted by zeal, is immensely superior to discourse that is well ordered and elaborated. To such reasoning it is enough to reply, that we are not the Apostles: we have not seen our Saviour in the flesh; we have not lived in daily intercourse with Him for years; we have not witnessed His miracles, His Resurrection; we have not the whole-souled earnestness of the Apostles, — their ardent zeal, their heroic sanctity. We cannot, therefore, presume to preach as they preached, unless, having seen what they saw, we live and labor as they lived and labored, and be ready to die as they died. The same may be said of the preaching of saints and saintly men. One must be a Curé of Ars to preach as the Curé of Ars.

The truth is, that the Church, from the beginning, under divine guidance, took the arts into her service; and, from being ministers of sin, she made them agents of grace for its destruction. Music, painting, sculpture, poetry have been so employed by her; and the glorious records of the Catholic pulpit, from Cyprian to Lacordaire, show conclusively that the art of oratory was enlisted with the others.

Preaching, then, being an art, must be studied as all art is studied, by learning its rules or methods, and by applying them. The knowledge of rhetorical rules is of no practical account without assiduous exercise in their application. Hence, to turn out efficient preachers, long and uninterrupted training in the composition and delivery of sermons is absolutely necessary. This training should begin in the preparatory seminary and be continued up to the time of ordination. In most seminaries, I believe, there is no provision made for the practice of English composition during the philosophy course; and, even in theology, the only exercises in it are the writing of a few sermons. The consequence is stiffness and gradual loss of skill in the literary expression of all thought, intellectual, emotional, or imaginative. And this consequence follows all the more surely, when Latin is the only language used in the principal classes; for it is well known that the daily use of a foreign tongue makes it difficult to speak or write one's own fluently and idiomatically. The official language of the Church must, indeed, be familiar to

every priest; but its influence on the use of the vernacular must be neutralized; and this can be done only by systematic exercise in it as frequently as possible.

I know that those charged with the training of our clergy give much anxious thought to the selection of such exercises and studies as are best adapted to the formation of an efficient priesthood. It is, then, with no purpose of censuring the present seminary curriculum, that I would suggest some such provisions as the following for the continuous training of our clerical students in composition and delivery.

First, in the preparatory seminary, I would recommend that subjects for essays be taken exclusively from Bible history, including the Life and Parables of our divine Lord, as well as the topography of the Holy Land and the manners, dress, domestic life and religious worship of the Jewish people. Themes taken from such subjects will surely be more conducive to the end of seminary training than those usually given in the rhetoric class. I would also confine elocutionary exercises to the practice of expressive reading and graceful gesture.

Secondly, one or two classes should be given every week to composition during the philosophy course. The aim in these classes should be ease and skill in the emotional and imaginative types of prose. In all literature, no better models of these types can be found than the Psalms and Prophecies of the Bible. These, then, ought to be read carefully and repeatedly, and afterwards reproduced or paraphrased. If the seminary cannot afford a teacher for this work, the young philosophers should be urged to do it by themselves; and some gentle pressure might be brought to bear on them to provide against their forgetting it.

The rules of Sacred Rhetoric ought to be mastered in the first year's theology and applied in the succeeding years. The best means of applying them, I should say, is not class or chapel sermons — although these, too, are necessary — but carefully written and memorized instructions delivered in parish churches, at first in the Sunday school and afterwards at the Masses. I know there may be serious obstacles to such parish work; but I am convinced there is none that cannot be overcome by tact and patience.

It will be thought by some that these suggestions, however useful in theory, require in practice an undue share of the time available for seminary study and class work. In reply, I would ask, is the main purpose of an American seminary the formation of profound theologians, without any trained ability of expression? Of what practical use would such men be in our missions? Does an apprentice become a finished carpenter by the study of mechanics? Could a man be trusted to run a locomotive because he knows all about the theory of steam? Does not common sense insist on practical training for all other professions? — why, then, make exception of the priesthood? If anything has to be crushed out of the curriculum, why must it be the art of Preaching — practised skill in discharging a primary duty of our ministry? Our divine Lord did not say to the Apostles: "Go and learn the Protean changes of *Katal*, the force of Greek particles, the interpretation of Koptic papyri and Tel-el-Amarna tablets;" but "Go *teach* ye all nations." This commission imposes two duties on seminaries: to impart knowl-

edge of what to teach, and skill in how to teach it. The one duty is as important and essential as the other. A priest who knows only his catechism and his Bible, but is well trained in the art of appropriate expression, is better equipped for saving souls, than one who has the Summa and its commentaries on his fingers' ends, but cannot turn out a decent English sentence. With all respect, therefore, for other seminary classes, I claim a place, and an important place, for the class of Sacred Rhetoric.

It is not the time, however, given for such a class that tells with seminarians, as much as the rank the class holds in the seminary and the importance attached to it by the diocesan authorities. The examination for Orders should test quite as carefully the candidate's fitness for the pulpit as his fitness for the confessional. Furthermore, diocesan promotions should be made to depend largely on efficiency in preaching. Insistance on such efficiency as a *conditio sine qua non* would contribute greatly to emphasize the importance of preaching for seminarians and priests alike.

This Manual has been written from a

strong conviction that something has to be done to make the average Sunday sermon more instructive, more interesting, more effective of spiritual good than it is at present. Preaching is, no doubt, of as high an order now as it has ever been; but it should be higher. The intelligence of those we address is keener, more developed, more inclined to scepticism, perhaps, than in past generations; and it will not be influenced by cant or shallowness or tricks of style or attitude. In these days, we must show ourselves "masters of the situation," we must "teach like one having authority," if we are to keep our hold on our people. Say what we may about our "gigantic strides" during the last century, there has been much weakening of faith among us from our close contact with non-Catholic society and literature. It is evident, then, that a much more strenuous effort is needed now than was needed fifty or a hundred years ago, to safeguard Catholics against the dangers, intellectual and moral, pressing in on them from this contact.

From what I have here written, the two-fold object of this Work may be inferred.

It is intended, first of all, to inculcate the necessity of earnest preparation for preaching, in view of the present requirements of American life, non-Catholic as well as Catholic. Its other object, equally important as the first and demanding more detailed treatment, is to show "How to prepare a Sermon." The idea throughout is to say a first word, not the last, on proper equipment for the American Catholic pulpit.

The Chapters on the Character of the Preacher, on his Intellectual Equipment, ann on the Systematic Teaching of Religion, are republished, with permission, from the *American Ecclesiastical Review.*

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CHAPTER I.

What is Preaching?

ELOQUENCE is the faculty of persuading another to some definite object. Spoken language is its chief and ordinary form. Refined to an art and embodied in continued oral discourse, it is styled oratory. This is divided into sacred and profane, according as the object to be attained belongs to the supernatural or the natural order.

Sacred oratory is popularly called Preaching, and may be defined as the address of a duly appointed minister of Christ on the revealed word of God, by which an audience, assisted by divine grace, is persuaded to some definite object in the supernatural order. Preaching of itself cannot be the efficient cause of conversion, as it was not instituted by our divine Lord to give sanctifying grace; but it is appointed by Him to dispose the will to receive and use those actual graces by which man is raised to the supernatural life or confirmed in it.

The object of Preaching is persuasion, that is, the movement of the will to some practical issue conducive to salvation. The enlightenment of the intellect by the exposition of revealed truth is a necessary means to the attainment of that object,—but only a means. A minister of the Gospel who would make it the end of his discourse might speak learnedly and usefully, but he would not preach. To do this, he should, by exposition and appeal to the feelings and passions, disgust men's souls with sin and enamor them of the sweet yoke of Christ; he should stir them to their lowest depths and inmost recesses; he should pull the bandage from their eyes and show them, with blanched cheek and awe-stricken look, the gulf yawning at their feet, the love of Him who came to save them from it, the death by which He saved them, and the bright and endless future which that death has secured for them.

That the movement of the will — not merely the instruction of the understanding — was to be the object of all apostolic preaching, is evident from the words our divine Lord addressed to His apostles im-

mediately before He ascended into Heaven: "Going therefore *teach* ye all nations." Here the word *teach* is an inadequate translation of the Greek word used which means not solely to teach, but to make disciples by teaching; that is, to use words of fire that will at the same time enlighten and inflame,—that will instruct the understanding and reform the will

This, too, is the meaning of St. Paul's words in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "The word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword: and reaching to the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The subject-matter of Preaching is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that is, the whole body of revelation, clustered round and centering in the Atonement of Calvary. In other words, it is the Logos, foreshadowed in the Old Law and fully revealed in the New; the Logos teaching, saving, governing, as Prophet, Priest, and King; the Logos as the Way, the Truth and the Life,—the Way guiding human conduct by His

commandments and counsels, the Truth enlightening the human intellect by the dogmas of revelation, the Life raising men to the supernatural state by the Sacraments, the Sacrifice of the Mass, and other salutary helps. This sublime subject must be taught in popular, persuasive language, as its direct and primary end is to unite the souls of men with God through the grace of Jesus Christ.

There is no true Christian Preaching without a legitimate mission. "*You have not chosen me*," says our divine Lord, "*but I have chosen you, that you may go and bear fruit, and your fruit may remain.*" Hence, the preaching of those not chosen will bear no permanent fruit, though they speak with the vigor of the Baptist, with the eloquence of Chrysostom. Their words may produce a temporary commotion and excitement, such as electricity produces in a dead body; but the body remains dead all the same. In fact, preaching without a mission is as irregular in the religious order, as the administration of Lynch law is in the civil.

Preaching is an organic function of the Church. It is like the Sacraments in this, that Christ is the primary and efficient cause

or agent of the effect produced, the preacher's office being only secondary and ministerial. St. Paul teaches this truth with notable persistence. "Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." "We are therefore ambassadors for Christ, God, as it were, exhorting by us." "Do you seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me?" Indeed, this idea of our teaching as Christ's ambassadors or representatives is significanly contained in the Greek word used by St. Mark to express our divine Lord's commission to the apostles, so that the full meaning of the text is: Go ye into the whole world, and, *as my ambassadors*, teach the Gospel to every creature. Still more explicitly Christ Himself conveys this important truth in the words: *You are not they who speak: but the Spirit of the Father speaketh in you.* And elsewhere: *He that heareth you heareth Me: and he that despiseth you despiseth Me.* The ambassador acts ministerially and is identified with the power that sends him: to hear the one is to hear the other.

In preaching, then, the priest stands be-

fore his people as the representative, the exponent, the voice of Jesus Christ: God exhorts by him; Christ speaks in him. What a sublime dignity, and what an incentive to painstaking, adequate preparation! "What would Christ say if He stood here in the flesh before this congregation? How would He say it? How am I to say the same thing so as not to discredit my ministry or Him whom I represent?" To every zealous priest, these questions will be full of inspiration. Knowing that "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above," he will begin his preparation with prayer; he will study his subject thoroughly; his vivid conception of it will suggest ample illustrations; he will keep a definite object before him, and use every effort to attain it; he will be simple, direct, earnest, fearless, as Christ Himself would be; in his delivery, he will put aside all thought of self, all timidity, all human respect, no matter in whose presence he stands; for as ambassador of his divine Master, he will *teach as one having power, as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

Some pulpit deliverances that we hear and read are not worthy of the name of Christian preaching. Here, for example, is a sermon on Honest Dealing. The preacher is wholly taken up with giving a material view of his theme, and makes but a passing allusion to its connexion with the supernatural life. "Honesty safeguards against the penitentiary; Honesty begets confidence, respect and esteem; Honesty is the best policy — it brings compound interest." These are the points developed; and to enforce them, only the grossest self-interest is appealed to. It is safe to say that there is scarcely a passage in the whole discourse that might not have been delivered by a pagan philosopher, if, indeed, he would be capable of uttering such commonplace platitudes. The preacher evidently forgot that a minister of the Gospel should preach the Gospel and the Gospel only. "Preach the Gospel to every creature," is the commission given to the apostles and through them to every duly appointed pastor of souls. We have no divine command to teach human philosophy. Ethical discourses are useful in their place; but their place is not

the Christian pulpit. I admit that self-interest and other natural motives not only may, but should, be urged by a preacher as secondary incentives to supernatural action. But to confine one's self wholly to them and thereby imply their sufficiency for the beginning and development of Christian life is a grave mistake involving doctrinal error and leading to pernicious practical results.

Christian doctrine is sometimes explained in such a dry, didactic manner, that it exercises no influence on the will or spiritual nature of the hearer. His acceptance of divine truth seems nothing more than a purely intellectual act, or, at best, it is only that dead faith of which St. James speaks. Such discourse is not preaching. Our mission is not to enlighten the intellect, while we leave the heart festering in sin. By virtue of our priesthood we can give back life to the dead soul; and by the obligation of our mission we are commanded to do so.—Do we fulfill this duty by those vapid, pointless generalities which we sometimes pass off on our people for sermons? Think of the prophet who was told to prophesy to the dry bones, and to call the spirit from

the four winds to "blow on these slain and let them live again,"—think of him, instead of fulfilling the divine injunction, discoursing to them on osteology or Babylonian history. Yet such violation of duty would not be more criminal than is that of a priest in charge of souls who leaves them to rot in sin while he explains to them the *circumincessio Trinitatis* or the *communicatio idiomatum*.

Of course, doctrinal instruction has to be given to the people. *Justus meus ex fide vivit.* A Christian life is essentially a supernatural life, and therefore a life directed by divine truth. Now divine truth must be first apprehended by the intellect before it influences the will. All this is undeniable; but it proves nothing more than that the knowledge of such truth is a necessary condition of effective preaching. Our divine Lord, as I have already intimated, did not send His apostles to establish a school of philosophy, but a living body of earnest men, "doers of the word, and not hearers only," — men all whose actions should be supernaturalized by divine knowledge permeating their spiritual nature, regulating

the operations of all their faculties, and directing them to the ultimate end of Christian life, namely, union through Christ with God.

Wo is unto me, says St. Paul, *if I preach not the Gospel.* But what kind of preaching fulfills this grave obligation? Is it fulfilled by merely talking at random to the people on Sundays and holidays? Some priests think so; and they talk *usque ad nauseam*, but they do not preach. Being glib of tongue and in no danger of breaking down, they never think of making any serious preparation for their weekly sermon. Before going into the pulpit, they put together a few commonplace ideas on the Gospel of the day, or they read over cursorily some other one's sermon. They then begin. They lash themselves into a passion for no apparent reason; they beat the air with unmeaning gestures; they bellow, stamp, overwhelm their hearers with a deluge of high-sounding but senseless words; and when, after much floundering, they come to an end, they leave the pulpit with the self-satisfied air of men who have deserved well of God and humanity. But

they are not, as they shall one day find out, *of the seed of those men by whom salvation was brought to Israel.* They incur the "wo" of St. Paul by not preaching the Gospel, and they incur that other curse uttered by Jeremias against those that do the work of the Lord "fraudulenter."

The people themselves contribute much toward the continuance of this kind of preaching. They seem to be satisfied with it, and sometimes they even applaud it. Yet how are they bettered by it? Does it check vice among them? Does it make them more honest, truthful, pure, charitable? Does it bring them to the Sacraments? Does it make the home happier, more united, more Christian? These questions the people never put to themselves; and hence no pressure is brought to bear on the pastor to make him supply more healthy food. Human nature does not take kindly to the earnest preparation necessary for preaching. It must feel the pressure of some external, palpable, material motives before it can be kept easily on a high level of action. Fear of consequences helps to make the priest punctual in attending

sick calls: could it not be made to help also in persuading him — when persuasion is necessary — to prepare his sermons with more care and thoroughness?

The truth is, that the bulk of people prefer not to be disturbed in their sinful habits. They will listen patiently, or at least without open protest, to any amount of speculative instruction on matters of doctrine. They are interested in controversial subjects; and they love to hear heresy denounced in unmeasured terms. They even shed tears at pathetic passages of sermons, and congratulate the preacher, and they seem to flatter themselves that the tears and congratulations are manifestations of a religious spirit. But that restitution they have to make; that lie about a neighbor they have to retract; that vicious habit or occasion of sin they do not wish to give up; that sacrilegious confession they have to make right: these and other sore spots in the conscience they wish the preacher to handle lightly.

Every priest in charge of souls should be deeply impressed with the vital importance of preaching, as a condition of salvation,

not only for his people, but also for himself. In God's ordinary providence, sinners take the first step toward conversion when they hear the truths of the Gospel announced to them. And if those truths be not fittingly announced and a sinner be lost in consequence, who — the preacher or the sinner —will merit and receive the greater punishment?

I do not believe that priets in this country are negligent in preparing their sermons; yet I presume to think that more abundant fruit might be produced, if some of them were more self-reliant and original, if they collected their matter from theology, Scripture, and Church history, rather than from foreign sermon books, and also, perhaps, if they kept their minds filled with a constant supply of fresh spiritual ideas by meditation and spiritual reading. The essential conservatism of the Church inclines priests to be conservative also in their method of preaching. Yet, *non nova sed nove*, is a sound principle in perfect keeping with the usage of all our great preachers and writers. The continuity of Catholic doctrine does not imply continuity in the

manner of presenting it. We are therefore free from the traditional mannerisms of the European pulpit; we are justified in breaking off from all foreign methods of preaching; and, what is more, we are obliged to break off from them, that we may adapt our mode of announcing the Gospel to the peculiar character and the advanced civilization of our people.

NOTE. It is unnecessary to tell Catholic readers that preaching has been always practised in the Church, as one of her most important organic functions. Yet, among the traditional misrepresentations which are still used to turn honest minds against us is this, that preaching fell into disuse in the Middle Ages. "When the Church," says Dr. Phelps, "lost its faith in the Bible as the only inspired source of knowledge, then sacerdotalism took the place of religious teaching, and the priesthood became too ignorant or too indolent, or both, to become preachers."

A candid speaker, before making this sweeping statement to a class of theological students, would have inquired whether we Catholics denied it, and if so, on what authority. Let us take the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as typical of the Middle Ages, and let us turn to Alzog's History of the Church, Vol. ii, p. 1033 (Pabisch and Byrne's translation); we read as follows: "Richard of St. Victor (cir. A. D. 1164), in a sermon delivered on Easter Sunday, said that it was not his intention to instruct his hearers, but simply to recall truths and facts to their minds; because, he added, they knew the teaching of Holy Scripture as well as him-

self." Further on Alzog writes: "Among the most eminent preachers of those times may be reckoned St. Yves of Chartres, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildebert of Mans, Godfrey of Bordeaux, Guilbert de la Porrée, Abelard, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, and many more of the Schoolmen, who put aside, for the time, the rigorous forms of the schools, and while instructing the people, employed language the most simple and the best calculated to convey to their minds a clear and intelligible idea of the matter in hand .... As was natural in an age when great preachers abounded, there were not wanting directions as to the best method of rendering preaching fruitful in good results. Treatises were written on the subject by Alanus of Ryssel and Guibert of Nogent," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II.

Personal Character of the Preacher.

Moral character is the foundation of all effective preaching. Ancient writers recognized its necessity for secular oratory. *Sit ergo nobis*, writes Quintilian, *orator quem instituimus, is qui a M. Catone finitur, vir bonus, dicendi peritus.* What place, he asks, is there for the cultivation of letters or art in a mind enslaved by passion? and he answers: *Non, hercle, magis quam frugibus in terra, sentibus ac rubis occupata. . . . Non igitur unquam malus idem homo et perfectus orator.* A priest's normal relation to God, established by sanctifying grace, may be interrupted in a moment of weakness and renewed afterwards; but should he once commit himself seriously in the parish where he ministers, no repentance will give back to his words the weight they had before his fall. When he is most eloquent—makes the strongest and most impassioned appeal to

the will—it will be remembered against him, no doubt unjustly, that he did not formerly act on his own words; and the remembrance will very much discount the force of his pleading. If this be the case with one who has done his utmost to repair the past, what will it be with him who has made no effort to repair it? How can he expect to teach effectively truths and duties which, it is shrewdly suspected, exercise no influence on his own life and conduct?

Hence, for a priest's words to have due influence on his people, he must be respected by them, not only for his official position, but also for his personal worth as a man and a Christian. They must believe implicitly in his learning, his judgment, his sincerity and consistency, his personal holiness, and his earnest concern for their salvation. They may applaud a facile, graceful, sweet-voiced speaker; and, bound by the magic of his words, they may be forced to weep or smile at his bidding: but when he would persuade them to a change of life, to the sacrifice of long-cherished habits—to the patient wearing of a crown of thorns — they look to the man behind his words, and

the final issue generally depends not on what he says, but on what he is. We look for light and counsel only to honest, unselfish, reliable men—men who speak decisively, but only from experience and conviction, who are incapable of deceiving, whose sterling personal worth has passed into a proverb.

How is such a character to be acquired and maintained? Certainly not by hypocrisy. The wolf in sheep's clothing, no matter how circumspect, is at best a clumsy bungler, and betrays himself sooner or later. Discovery has ever been the end of all double lives. Mr. Hyde is invariably identified with Dr. Jekyl; and then come collapse, shame, scandal, etc. It would, therefore, be as silly as it would be sinful to attempt to keep up a respectable character before the public, while the interior remained depraved and vicious. A man's true character is revealed more unmistakably in his unconscious and spontaneous, than in his conscious and studied, actions. No one can be always on his guard; and when he is off it, natural disposition will break out. The more successful he is in his first efforts to deceive, the more likely is he afterwards to

drop the mask or to be caught grinning behind it.

All pretence, then, of piety and sanctimoniousness, as a means of establishing a reputation, would inevitably end in failure and disgrace. But even though it succeeded, the hypocritical preacher would gain little by it. The self-contempt naturally produced by it would, without his knowing it, react on his style and delivery, and give a hollow ring to his voice, and break that magnetic current that ever flows between the sincere, earnest speaker and his audience.

No; there is but one way to gain a lasting solid reputation, and it is, to be what you appear to be. Personal, interior holiness of life must be the living root from which those outward actions of yours will grow, by which your character with your people is to be determined. Our Saviour's eighteen years' abode in Nazareth, His forty days' retreat in the desert, His prayer in the garden, — all teach us this lesson, that to draw others to God, we must, first, be ourselves united to Him. We must practise prayer and self-denial and works of mercy

and justice, for our own personal sanctification, before we can duly enforce these obligations on others. It is only when we do practise them, that we may expect our words to be charged with the most abundant grace for those who hear them. Then alone shall we be best able to blend sweetness with strength, mercy for the sinner with zeal for God's honor. Then will our people be converted to the heart, when in our burning words mercy and truth will have met each other; justice and peace will have kissed.

But the personal holiness of the preacher will have another effect on his words. It will enable him, as nothing else could do, to present the familiar truths of religion in the fresh, vivid, and attractive colors in which daily meditation has clothed them in his own soul. His *well-ordered words will be as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul*, because they will originate in his own sweet, habitual converse with his divine Master in prayer. The most beautiful as well as the most sublime doctrines have frequently no energizing influence on our people. The defect is not in the doctrines,

but in the teacher. He presents them in a dry, scholastic form, because he has never conceived them spiritually; he possesses only an intellectual apprehension of them, and he gives all his care to the accurate impress of that apprehension on his hearers.

NOTE. Great preachers, who were great chiefly because they were men of prayer, never fell into such an error. Each divine truth was to them not only an intellectual light, but, much more, a spiritual force that influenced the will by kindling its energies into action. It was to them a living reality, invested by the imagination with a concrete form; and it was in this form that they presented it to their hearers. See, for example, in the following passage, how Newman presents the doctrine of the Incarnation:

"God in the Person of the Word, the Second Person of the All-glorious Trinity, humbled Himself to become her (Mary's) Son. Non horruisti Virginis uterum, as the Church sings, 'Thou didst not disdain the Virgin's womb.' He took the substance of His virgin flesh from her, and clothed in it He lay within her; and He bore it about with Him after birth, as a sort of badge and witness that He, though God, was hers. He was nursed and tended by her; He was suckled by her; He lay in her arms. As time went on, He ministered to her and obeyed her. He lived with her for thirty years, in one house, with an uninterrupted intercourse, and with only the saintly Joseph to share it with Him. She was the witness of His growth, of His joys, of His sorrows, of His prayers; she was blest with His smile, with the touch of His hand, with the whisper of His affection, with the expression of His thoughts and His feelings, for that length of time."

Closely allied to personal holiness, if not included in it, is the apostolic spirit, implying a high estimate of the value of a soul, combined with active, untiring zeal for its salvation. It is the spirit that filled the apostles after Pentecost, the spirit that has baptized the world in the blood of missionaries. It is the most sublime expression of fraternal charity and self-sacrifice, for the priest imbued with it is willing to become anathema for his brethren. He makes himself the servant of all to save all. Comfort, ease, pleasure, wealth, esteem — all these he sets aside to gain souls to Christ. He is a man of one idea, one aim, one life-purpose. The world thinks him narrow, angular, unmanageable; it sneers at his whole-souled earnestness; and it invents the silliest theories to account for his motives. But he is as indifferent to the world's censure as he is to its allurements; and he keeps on straight to his object, undaunted by difficulty or failure, because he knows that his beloved Master is with him and that he is doing His work.

When such a man preaches, his words fall like rain on a thirsting soil; they bring

hope, and repentance, and peace to men's souls. Jesus Christ speaks through him,— *in me loquitur Christus*, — and because the divine Voice is not impeded by the self-consciousness or self-seeking of the minister, it exercises somewhat of the same sweet, irresistible influence as that with which the Master taught the multitudes in the fields and villages of Galilee. Men come away from such a sermon not with empty praise of the preacher, of his beautiful language, his fine elocution, or his graceful action; — all these are forgotten or unobserved in the one thought he has left burning in their souls, that salvation is the one thing necessary and the present is the time to secure it.

Divine truth announced by a preacher of apostolic spirit is not minimized or trimmed to suit fastidious ears. Hell is eternal fire; and sin is a festering, fetid carcass which the sinner carries about with him; and temptation is the hot breath of Satan agitating the soul. The best surgeon is the one of nerve, strong and steady to use the scalpel to save, undeterred by the patient's agonizing cry to spare.

No one who would preach the Word fit-

tingly and effectively can dispense with art and culture in the preparation and delivery of his sermon. Yet there are few ordinary shortcomings in a preacher which the bulk of the people will not either overlook or treat with kindly indulgence, if they see that he is a man of apostolic zeal, regardless of himself, and absorbed heart and soul in their salvation. A drowning man does not object to the roughness of the hand stretched out to save him. Neither are we inclined to be over-nice about the kind of fire at which we warm our numbed fingers. The soul, too, thirsting after the strong, living God, will hear His voice in the earnest, ringing tones of the man of prayer and zeal, though his words be plain and unstudied and his intonation inflected according to no artistic rule. He is, no doubt, bound to perfect, by patient, industrious training, the faculty of speech and to acquire a mastery of graceful and forcible delivery. Besides, after St. Paul, the model of all apostolic preachers, he should strive to become all things to all men, that he may save all. He has a mission to the rich and cultured, as well as to the poor and

ignorant; and he should no more disgust the former by bad grammar and uncouth gestures, than he should daze the latter by metaphysical subtleties and Greek quotations. Undeniable as all this is, it nowise modifies the fundamental truth, that zeal is the soul of preaching; and, hence, a priest possessed of this one quality will in time work his way, consciously or unconsciously, to such adequacy of expression and naturalness of delivery as will secure his preaching from being despised by any one.

NOTE. Zeal for souls should be so predominant in the character of a preacher, as to exclude all unworthy motives from the preparation and delivery of his sermons. One of those motives is the love of popularity. Popular preachers are not always those who do most good. The immediate end which many of them have in view is not the spiritual good of their hearers, but rather to please the ear and eye and imagination, and to touch the sensibilities. Weeping eyes and wet handkerchiefs are the ultimate effect which they attain —the principal effect to which they aspire. There is a luxury in crying over wickedness in general which some people confound with true devotion; and many popular preachers encourage the delusion. I do not know how they reconcile their consciences with such dereliction of duty. They may be in good faith, but, *de facto*, they do not preach the Word of God.

The influence of preaching is lessened very much and sometimes wholly destroyed,

when it becomes known that the preacher is harsh in exacting pew-rents and stole-money, especially if he has at the same time earned a character for miserly living and disregard of the claims of charity. Our people contribute liberally without pressure to the decent support of their clergy; and few things are more distasteful to them than to hear, Sunday after Sunday, intemperate tirades against defaulting pew-renters, instead of the exposition of the Gospel to which they have a right. High-handed measures for collecting church monies afford a pretext to many for antipathy to all Christian teaching, for murmurs against the Church and her ministers, and for neglect of religious duties.

A preacher's character should enable him to keep in touch and sympathy with the *men* as well as with the women of his audience. A local church patronized and maintained chiefly by the female sex is afflicted with "dry rot," caused to a great extent by the *weakness* of the pastor. He is effeminate in his manner, dress and conversation; he preaches lackadaisical sermons; he is "sweet" in his counsels re-

garding the higher life; he is strong on Scapulars, Rosaries, new devotions, and, in general, on the accidents of religion; but on its heart and essence, on Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance, he has little or nothing to say. Men have an involuntary contempt for such a preacher. They avoid hearing him whenever they can do so decently. They cannot look up to him as their superior in any manly quality—not even in good sense; and as to his preaching, they feel instinctively that it is not primarily intended for them, but for the other sex. Manliness of character, straightforwardness, wide knowledge of life, practical sense must characterize every preacher who would maintain a salutary influence over the male portion of his hearers.

Finally, want of gravity destroys the influence of many preachers. Known to make light of everything, they are not taken seriously even when they intend to be most earnest in exhortation or rebuke. People cannot understand how men connected so intimately as priests are with the sublime mysteries of Redemption and dealing every

day with the tremendous issues of eternal life and eternal death, are capable of habitual frivolity, of treating life as a "huge joke," of playing Merry Andrew in a cassock. Of course, every healthy-minded person, be he priest or layman, must occasionally unbend and seek relief and rest from the strain of serious work. And in his moments of relaxation few things are better calculated to give elasticity and tone to his jaded spirits than an honest, hearty laugh. But laughter and gayety in season are nowise opposed to the calm seriousness that should be a prominent feature of the priestly character. Indeed, a bright, cheerful face and a genial smile and a pleasant word for every one win confidence and love for a priest even from those who do not believe in his ministrations.

NOTE. To avoid mistakes that would lessen his influence as a preacher, a young priest should be orderly in his habits, should take advice before introducing reforms, should be "all eyes and ears, but no tongue" for some time after coming to a new mission. Above all, he must manifest no likes or dislikes; he must have no favorites; he must side with no cliques or parties in his parish.

CHAPTER III.

Mental Equipment.

In preparing a student for the ministry of preaching, I take it for granted that he does not intend to preach other people's sermons, but is resolved to write and memorize his own after serious study and meditation of the subject matter. To do this, his mind must be well furnished with general and special knowledge, and well developed; in other words, he must be a well educated gentleman.

No other profession demands such a thorough training of its aspirants as the Catholic priesthood. And surely, with seven or eight years in a parochial school, six years in the Arts' course, and six more in the theological seminary, no young priest should have reason to be diffident of his ability to preach the Gospel worthily to any audience. Yet with all the assiduous care taken by the Church in training her minis-

ters, it cannot be denied that some of them fall below the level of efficiency in their preaching. The cause seems to be, they either had not been fully equipped for their work in the seminary, or they allow their minds to stagnate on the mission from neglect of study.

The mental equipment necessary for a young priest to enable him to preach as he ought, comprises two things, knowledge and development.

1. Knowledge. If a student who has studied diligently to the end of his course recognize that he knows very little, but has a strong, efficacious desire and purpose to keep on enlarging what little he knows, he satisfies all that is demanded of him under this head. He possesses the three essential requirements for mental culture, namely, maturity of intellect, humility, and thirst for knowledge. Acquaintance with the phenomena of nature or history is not knowledge; neither is the memorizing of theses in philosophy or theology. Knowledge of anything is the intellectual comprehension of all that is knowable about it. What is its cause? What are its effects? What are its

relations to other known things? What are its bearings on life? The extent to which we can answer these and other questions regarding facts or truths is the measure of the knowledge we have of them. Let a young priest fresh from the seminary test his knowledge of any thesis in philosophy or theology or of any fact of Church history by these questions, and I think he will confess candidly that he has acquired only the first essential element of all that the intellectual and practical knowledge of it comprises.

Let him ask, for example, how far he has studied the bearing of dogmatic theology on his own life. Has revelation been to him only an illumination of the intellect? or has it been also a spiritual light and force, elevating the will, curbing the passions, and conforming and uniting his whole being to God? Has the study of the tract de Deo Uno et Trino filled him with adoration and awe? Has his heart melted in gratitude and love, in sorrow and repentance, as he read page after page de Incarnatione? Has he trembled with fear and prayed earnestly for divine help and protection, as moral

theology unfolded to him the innumerable forms of man's rebellion against the majesty of his Creator? If a student has to acknowledge that he has never studied theology in this spiritual, practical light, although he knows that it is in this light he shall have to preach it to the people, then he must admit that, under this consideration alone,—the bearing of theology on life,—his knowledge of the sacred science is but one step removed from ignorance.

Yet he should not be discouraged. True knowledge is a growth of the soul—a growth that is to reach perfection only in eternity. As long, then, as we have a thirst for knowledge and give what time we can to satiating it, we need not be anxious about the progress we make; the after-life will supply whatever deficiency may remain.

It must not be inferred from what I have just said, that I undervalue the teaching of sacred sciences in our seminaries. It is scarcely reasonable to expect a professor to become a spiritual director in the class-hall and to turn his lectures into meditations. The intellectual or scientific acquirement of revealed truth is the basis of that spiritual

knowledge we should aim at, and is, therefore, absolutely necessary to every minister of the Gospel. But he must not confound the basis with the structure he has to build upon it. — The building must be his own work.

Knowledge of divine truth must be part of ourselves before we can impart it fruitfully to others: what we have made our own only by the intellect, we can impart only to the intellect; what we have brought home to our own conscience and life,—this, and this only, we should bring home to the conscience and life of our hearer.

To become an efficient preacher, then, a newly ordained priest must have studied diligently all the branches of sacred science taught in the seminary, and he must be resolved to study them again on the mission, but from a more scientific as well as from a more practical standpoint, and with a special view of realizing their bearing on his moral and spiritual life.

Note. This continuation of ecclesiastical studies is practised informally by all priests who keep alive the spirit of their priesthood. They take a keen interest in the doctrinal and moral questions discussed in our clerical Monthlies and Quarterlies, and they speak of those questions when they meet their fellow priests.

They take notes of obscure Scripture passages and consult some standard commentary on their meaning. They are not content with the summary of Church history which they studied in the seminary, but they read with avidity what the ablest investigators and writers have to say on special questions or representative characters. The refining and elevating influence of all this reading is increased and spiritualized by the practical application they make of it to themselves. Such fragmentary reading is useful and praiseworthy as far as it goes, although it is not scientific or scholarly.

2. Development. It is the office of an ecclesiastical seminary (in the intellectual department) not only to teach a certain amount of book-knowledge, but, what is of vastly greater importance, to cultivate and develop all the mental powers, especially those that have the closest and most important bearing on the composition and delivery of a sermon. The intellect should be trained in the habit of clear, definite thought; it should be familiar with the principles and forms of logic; it should seek and establish order in everything with which it deals; finally, it should select with propriety and taste not only matter for study but the best authors in which to study it. The memory, the imagination, and the feelings require similar training, although, as far as I know, to the development of the

last two little or no direct attention is paid in the seminary.

a) The habit of clear definite thinking lies at the root of all adequate expression of thought. It is, therefore, the fundamental element in the expository part of a sermon and in all catechetical instructions. In every well educated mind a sharp line is drawn between knowledge and ignorance; and everything obscure or doubtful or even probable is classified with the unknown.

The vulgar pride of display leads some to talk of what they know nothing definitely. Hence the habit of rash assertion, of disregard for exact truth, of wilful deception. I do not say that any priest would be influenced by such a habit in the pulpit; but should people know that "it is his way" in his everyday life, they lose much of their confidence in his preaching. The same effect is produced by those who wish to pass for knowing everything knowable. They are found out sooner or later, and then their influence falls with a crash.

Mental laziness makes many satisfied with fractional knowledge. A student, for instance, has an impression that he read

somewhere of a pope under cruel pressure signing a concordat with some emperor, which concordat attempted to give away some right or privilege over which the pope had no control. The student does not know who was the pope, who was the emperor, what were the terms of the deed, whether it were perfected or not, and in what year and under what circumstances the transaction took place. He has Alzog's and Parsons' works in his library, but he is too lazy to consult either of them; and so he contents himself with a blurred impression instead of definite knowledge of an important historical fact.

b) The principles and forms of logic. Some hold that a sermon ought to be a syllogism in disguise. If this be so, it is evident that a preacher should be intimately familiar with the use of this form of argument and should know when and how to vary it by the substitution of one or other of its modifications. But whether we use the deductive or the inductive method of exposition, practical knowledge of logic and masterly skill in the use of it are most desirable, if not necessary, in every priest.

Besides, it is only by our intimate acquaintance with its principles and rules that we shall be able to detect and expose the fallacies that underlie all doctrinal error. There are now few parishes in this country in which honest-minded, truth-seeking men, weary of being carried about by every wind of doctrine, do not apply to our priests for instruction. Hence the grave duty of being prepared not only to support the truths of Catholic faith by valid arguments, but also to point out the weakness of objections urged against it. Neither of these can be done without practical skill in the art of reasoning.

NOTE. At the risk of being thought behind the time, I venture to say that the old scholastic method of teaching was incomparably superior to the shallow one now in use, for the purpose of making students exact, profound and consecutive in the habit of reasoning. The syllogism, like the first element of every art, may be easily turned into ridicule; but the first element has to be learned for all that.

c) Order. The trained intellect always works for order—order in its ideas, its judgments and its reasoning, order in the employment of time, order in the arrangement of surroundings,—order in everything. This habit of order is invaluable to a priest, as it

leads him to adopt the best means of utilizing odds and ends of time between ministerial duties. Five minutes may count for little in themselves; but by reading the Bible consecutively, five minutes daily, the whole of the Old Testament would be gone through in a year, and in a little over three months more, the New Testament also. A priest of well-ordered mind has a keen perception of the value of such uniform work, and he does it with steady, resolute perseverance. He is a stranger to *ennui;* he has not to take to novel-reading, or to yawning his mornings over the newspaper, or to paying unnecessary visits, *to kill time.* He finds every day not minutes but hours to devote to study or writing, and at the end of a year, he has acquired a breadth and depth of knowledge and attained an intellectual and spiritual culture such as his neighbor of desultory reading and unorderly habits has never dreamt of.

It may be thought that a studious life is incompatible with the active duties of the ministry, and that financial worry — the cross of most American priests—unfits them to apply their minds to any serious system-

atic reading, On the contrary, the habit of of which I speak regulates and perfects the discharge of duty, inasmuch as it keeps clearly before the mind what is to be done and how it is to be done. Besides, most of the distress caused by worry comes through the confused, dazed way in which people look at it and bear it. In trying emergencies, it is easier to appreciate than to practise coolness, self-possession, calm consideration of "ways and means," and, as a last resort, patient endurance; yet it is certain that the habit of order in other things will help us here also.

It will help us in another way too, by systematizing our reading—making it a continuous study of each subject, or, at least, of a division of each subject, before we take up new matter. Of course, it is all the better if a priest so arrange his free time that, each day, so much of it will be given to Sacred Scripture, so much to theology, etc. This arrangement has the advantage of variety and is none the less attractive for being in line with the daily routine of the seminary. Unity or diversity of subject, however, for daily reading may be left to

each one's choice; the main point is continuity—perseverance. To secure this, it is most advisable that a young priest should begin with short, interesting subjects and give to each even less time than he can afford and is inclined to give. In this way the love of study is whetted and the habit of it, as it grows stronger, has room for larger development.

d) Judgment in selection of subjects and authors. Common sense ought to make every professional man see the necessity of becoming proficient in all the knowledge essential to his calling, before he takes up studies either foreign to it or only remotely connected with it. Hence a priest's first study ought to be to acquire a thorough knowledge of Sacred Scripture, theology, Church history, and canon law. It ought, indeed, to be his only regular study, because the longest life is too short to complete it.

"But what of philosophy?" you will ask; "what of science? of literature? of current history? of local affairs? Is it not the duty of the priest, as of every citizen, to keep in touch with the thought and action

of his day? Is he justified in isolating himself from the multiform life of the world around him—he who is appointed to mould that life and to direct it to its supernatural end?"

In reply, I say that I am speaking here only of the adequate training of the intellect in seminaries and its results on the mission. One of those results should be the judicious selection of subjects and authors for a systematic course of study with a special view to preparation for the pulpit. Outside this course much literary work remains to be done, as the preceeding questions imply; but the scope of this chapter does not call for discussion of them here.

Only the best works on the subjects selected ough to be studied. A young priest can easily learn which are those books by inquiry of his former professors. A small but choice collection of works is much better than a large and miscellaneous one, as the latter offers too many temptations to unsystematic and fragmentary reading.

e) Memory. Whatever some psychologists tell us to the contrary, we know from

experience that a good memory can be acquired by assiduous practice. Class-exercises and sermons during the seminary course would seem not to supply sufficient training for this faculty, as the majority of young priests undergo positive pain in committing to memory what they write for delivery. Hence, many of them soon give up the practice of memorizing, except occasionally when they have to preach a set sermon. They find it easier to talk than to preach, and, having no cogent stimulus to the harder work, they naturally abandon it.

I think students with defective memories would be helped very much, if greater accuracy in the repetition of Scripture texts and other quotations were severely enforced in seminaries. Besides, such students ought to be taken in hand individually; the reasons for acquiring a good memory ought to be explained to them; and they ought to have daily exercises given them, until they can easily remember what they read after a few repetitions.

f) Imagination. This function of the soul sometimes seems to work independently

of will-control, as in dreams, reveries, distractions, etc. When it works in this way, it is called the passive imagination. Ascetic writers lay down wise rules for the restraint of its most troublesome tendency, namely, distractions in prayer. If those rules be observed faithfully, besides the spiritual benefits that will be secured, the mind will be very much strengthened, and much precious time will be saved. It is, however, not to the training of the passive, but of the active, imagination I wish to direct attention here.

The active, or constructive, imagination is the art-faculty of the soul. It is also indispensible in science for the invention of those theories that frequently lead to the discovery and establishment of new physical laws. Hence it is aesthetic and scientific, — aesthetic, when its object is the expression of the Beautiful, scientific, when it is used for the investigation of the True. I speak of it here only in its aesthetic aspect.

St. Augustine's theory of preaching is, that it should teach, that it should please, that it should move; that is, it should teach

the intellect by exposition, it should please the imagination by illustration, and it should move the will by persuasion. For the essential purpose of a sermon, it is not enough to make a doctrine or duty clear to the understanding; it must be made to appear also pleasant, attractive, useful, beautiful; and this is done chiefly by appeal to the imagination. This appeal is made by examples, comparisons, analogies, figures, etc.; and its usual literary form is narration or description.

The only formal training of the imagination attempted in seminaries, as far as I know, is the *compositio loci*, and application of the senses, recommended to students as a help to meditation. How faithfully this recommendation is carried out, it does not belong to me to say,—*videant consules;* but no mental exercise develops the faculty of expression; and it is expression — style — taste that gives the crowning grace and beauty to every aesthetic creation or reproduction of the imagination. — I cannot say that our young priests show in their first sermons any adequate training in the tasteful, finished expression of imaginative con-

ceptions. They may have learned it years ago; but through want of practice they seem to have forgotten it.

g) The feelings. Only men of strong feeling can be orators. One who is unmoved by sorrow or suffering is incapable of moving others to sympathy with it. A cold, cynical disposition can no more enkindle enthusiasm than an icicle can warm a room.

Strong feeling is found only in sensitive organizations. Its manifestation may be repressed by a strong will; but, all the same, it cuts into the soul. Sensitiveness, however, may become blunted like a knife-edge; and when this happens, not only our emotional consciousness is dulled, but our power of emotional expression is correspondingly weakened. Extensive indulgence of the appetites, unrefined surroundings, egotism and all forms of selfishness — these are some of the influences that weaken or destroy the strong, keen-edged feelings which enter into the equipment of every efficient preacher.

If a young priest try earnestly, by the use of what time he can spare, to attain the

knowledge and mental equipment here outlined, his sermons will become year by year more effective and fruitful — more luminous in exposition and illustration, more fervid in their appeal to the feelings, more powerful in their influence on the will.

CHAPTER IV.

Faculty of Expression.

Speech is the ordinary means by which we convey to others what we think and feel. It is supplemented and perfected by gesture which "includes all significant movements of the body and limbs, and the expression of the countenance." Hence, speech and gesture combine to make up ideal expression; and theoretic knowledge of both as well as practical skill in their use, is absolutely necessary for every accomplished public speaker.

1. Speech. The time is now past when zeal and necessity excused the use of "broken English" in preaching. Every workman is supposed to know how to select and use the tools of his trade. Words are the preacher's tools: he should, therefore, have an intimate knowledge of their meaning, and the correct, scholarly use of them should be to him like a second nature.

The study of the vernacular is, then, a strict duty for all those who aspire to preach the Word. Such study is intimately associated with the habit of clear thinking and a sincere love of truth. If, through mental laziness, we content ourselves with vague and confused ideas, we cannot see the necessity, when we give them expression, of choosing among several words of cognate meaning any one in preference to the others;—we take the first that occurs to us. So, too, if we have no care whether or not we convey our ideas accurately to others,—whether or not we exaggerate or in any way deviate from the truth, — we shall take no trouble to select words suited to give clear and definite expression to the corresponding ideas in our minds. On the other hand, one who thinks clearly and speaks as he thinks, will so choose his words that they will be the exact reflex of his thoughts.

A preacher is limited in his sermons to the vocabulary of his hearers; and even from this he must exclude slang as well as vulgar words and expressions. The difficulty of exposition and persuasion is very much increased by this limitation. It is

not only necessary to have a clear and distinct apprehension of the truths to be taught, and to have appropriate words for their conveyance; but those words must be intelligible to the particular audience addressed.

To use words correctly in preaching, a student or priest must have acquired the habit of using them correctly in ordinary conversation. Slang and vulgar words are odious violations of good taste; but, worse still, their daily use is a serious hindrance to extempore discourse. They are the first words that will present themselves; and while we search for others, more dignified and appropriate, we have to pause, or stammer, or flounder, until we think of substitutes. And even these, in most cases, will be found to be as inadequate or as unscholarly as the others were unbecoming. So that generally we steer from Scylla to be wrecked on Charybdis.

Worse, perhaps, than slang and vulgarisms, are learned and technical words, beyond the comprehension of the people. The former convey some meaning; the latter, none whatsoever. Yet there is no more

prevalent fault to be found in sermons than the use of such words. Sermon-books, both original and translated, abound in them,

ILLUSTRATION. Here are some words met in the first three pages of a sermon on Detraction: *premeditated, indiscriminate, sooth, species, irretrievably, baleful, primary, indispensible, votive, accession of circumstances, aggravation.* The preacher in this case was the more inexcusable, as his audience was made up mostly of the poor and uneducated. It is evident that with a little trouble he might have found equivalent homely terms or phrases to use instead of the foregoing words; and it is certain from his well known zeal that he would have done so, had he reflected on the larger good he would do thereby. The oratorical instinct leads every true preacher to determine unconsciously the calibre of his audience and to adapt his words to it. But not every one who thinks his sermons worthy of publication is gifted with the oratorical instinct.

Many preachers never reflect that their words are beyond the comprehension of their audience; some are too lazy to change theological into popular phraseology; while others who try to make the change do not succeed on account of their limited vocabulary. Extensive reading and frequent writing on doctrinal and moral themes can do much to remedy this defect in our sermons; but reading and writing must be supplemented with the study of words in-

dividually and in their relations to their synonyms and antonyms.

Every language is a growth, depending for its conditions on the growth of the nation speaking it. For centuries after the Norman Conquest (A. D. 1066), Anglo-Saxon, the mother of our present speech, was spoken only by the English peasantry and yeomanry, the language of the court and the nobility being Norman-French, mostly made up of Latin words. Political events, however, brought the conqueror and the conquered more and more closely together, until they became blended in one strong, self-reliant, independent people. This union naturally involved the corresponding union of the Latin *patois* of the Norman with the original Anglo-Saxon. The result was the formation of the English language. Hence, the first notable stage in the growth of this language of ours was the accession to it, or rather its absorption, of a large number of Norman-Latin words. Some centuries afterwards, a custom began, arising in many cases from necessity, but in more from pedantry, of anglicising and introducing words directly from the original

Latin. Thus we have English words taken, some directly, some indirectly, from the language of ancient Rome; and even many are taken in both ways from the same root. Of these latter I give a few examples from Trench's "English, Past and Present."

"*Secure* and *sure*, both from the Latin *securus*, but one directly, the other through the French; *fidelity* and *fealty*, both from the Latin *fidelis*, but one directly, the other at second-hand; *species* and *spice*, both from the Latin *species*, spices being properly only kinds of aromatic drugs; *blaspheme* and *blame*, both from *blasphemare*, but *blame* immediately from the French *blamer;* add to these *granary* and *garner; tradition* and *treason;*" etc. A fuller list than Trench's may be found in Morris's Historical English Grammar, p. 5.

Other languages also have contributed some words; and, within the present century, Greek has been largely drawn on for terms of science, art and manufacture. Latin, however, has been always the chief source from which English has been enriched.

Now, Norman-French words have been

so long incorporated with the spoken language of the people, that a preacher may use them freely without much danger of obscurity or misunderstanding. But this cannot be said of words taken directly either from Latin or Greek, unless they be popular names for familiar things or ideas. Hence, in choosing words for use in the pulpit, it is of much advantage to know not only the origin, or root, of the word, but also the manner of its introduction into the language.

Some years ago, an impression prevailed among preachers, that the dignity of the pulpit did not allow the use of homely terms, when statelier ones could be found to replace them. Those men changed *fatherly* into *paternal*, *brotherly* into *fraternal*, *ask* into *interrogate*, *bury* into *commit to earth*, etc. Such affectation is now discarded, if not despised; and the dignity of the pulpit depends chiefly on the earnestness of the preacher and the amount of spiritual good his preaching confers on the people. Besides, a homely word of reputable standing differs widely from a vulgar one. There is no sacrifice of the laws of diction or of good taste in the use of words "perfumed

with home associations." "Saxon derivatives," writes Genung (Practical Rhetoric, p. 44), "constitute the foundation of the language. Being the earliest words, they stand for the primitive ideas: they are the words of the family and the home and the everyday relations of life. They are therefore the natural terms for common intercourse, for simple and direct emotions, for strong and hearty sentiments. Saxon is especially the language of strength; and its short words, and sturdy sounds join well with its homely meanings to give it impress and cogency."

A preacher should never be led by vulgar usage to employ words in a sense not given them by good writers. *Nice*, *splendid*, *fine*, *guess*, with many others, have each a precise meaning, and this alone should be attached to them. Nothing in English composition or speech evinces culture and scholarship more than taste and accuracy in the selection and use of words.

It may not be amiss here to give a few suggestions on the arrangement of words in sentences.

Simple sentences, being the most direct

and the most easily understood, are the best suited for preaching. However, to give variety as well as smoothness to style, they should be intermixed with sentences of other kinds. These should be short, and, if complex, not more than one subordinate conjunction should be used. Few things are so bewildering to an audience as to hear a long sentence with dependent clauses introduced by *if*, *when*, *although*, *whereas*, *nevertheless*, etc.

Compound sentences are made up of two or more simple sentences joined by coordinate conjunctions (*and*, *or*, *but*, *therefore*). They are not much used in popular conversation, and therefore should be introduced sparingly into sermons. Besides, if they contain several members, they tire the attention of the hearer and probably prejudice him against the preacher. In reference to attention, the following words of Herbert Spencer convey a useful lesson: "A reader or listener has at each moment but a limited amount of mental power available. To recognize and interpret the symbols presented to him requires part of this power; to arrange and combine the images

suggested requires a further part; and only that part which remains can be used for realizing the thought conveyed. Hence, the more time and attention it takes to receive and understand each sentence, the less time and attention can be given to the contained idea; and the less vividly will that idea be conceived."

Keeping this principle in mind, we should reflect, before using lengthy complex or compound sentences, how much mental power for absorbing our ideas will be left to the audience, after they have expended the necessary amount on the interpretation of our words and on the arrangement and combination of images produced by them.

To acquire a free, easy style adapted to the pulpit, a student should read much, and he should write much.

a) As to reading for style, he should attend more to the form than to the matter. His chief study must be to find, not what the author says, but how he says it. Hence, the reading of newspapers and novels is rarely of any service in the literary culture of young people. They look directly and primarily for news to the former and for

the *denouement* of the plot to the latter; and in neither case do they take any serious note of the diction or the style of what they read.

Even students who have gone through a full course of rhetoric should read the matter again with the view of adapting its principles and rules to the composition of a sermon. It would add very much to the utility of this reading to study in connexion with it some classical works exemplifying the different forms of prose composition,—description, narration, exposition, argumentation and persuasion.

NOTE. Narration relates events; description pourtrays objects; exposition analyzes truths; argumentation proves them; persuasion aims at embodying them in action. No literary work is written exclusively in any of these forms; but as a composition uses one or other of them principally, it is called narrative or expository, argumentative or persuasive. All five forms are used in preaching; although, as we shall see hereafter, the argumentative is not to be used in an ordinary Sunday sermon.

b) Writing. *Caput est quamplurimum scribere*, is a well known saying of Quintilian. Rules and suggestions for preaching are useless, unless they are put in practice; and this is done by frequent writing. Origi-

nal composition is the exercise of a certain creative power with which every human soul is endowed. It is the only road to literary perfection; and without it, there can be little effective preaching. There are, no doubt, fluent speakers who do not write; but fluency is not eloquence; and unless young priests write for a considerable time after their ordination, there may be brilliant passages, but there will be no artistic finish or beauty, in their discourse. It will lack dignity, self-restraint, matured thought, measured expression; it will run into tiresome digressions, and be too detailed in some parts, too meagre in others.

It is most important that the habit of frequent, if not daily, writing should be kept up by ecclesiastical students while reading philosophy and theology. Perhaps no easier or more useful means for doing this could be found than to write a paraphrase of a chapter of the Bible every day.

The training of the voice is a necessary condition of all effective speech. A harsh, grating, unmusical voice spoils the delivery of the most eloquent words. It pains an audience to listen to it; and they will not

listen to it when they can decently avoid it. The human voice in its normal state is clear, musical, expressive; but, like all divine gifts, it must not be neglected or abused. Any practice known to be injurious to it ought to be abandoned. Habitual excess in any external form tells on it very quickly, destroying that full, rich resonance which gives it its sweetness and expressiveness.

Singing is an important help to voice development. Hence, the class of sacred chant in the seminary should not be shirked, as it sometimes is, on the plea of no time, no voice, no ear or taste for music. The exercise of the vocal organs, no matter how imperfectly performed, will gradually develop their flexibility and will produce that purity and fulness of tone in the pronunciation of the vowels which is so essential in all impressive and emotional speech.

A more systematic training of the voice than singing consists in daily exercises in the two general divisions of elocution; namely, orthoepy, or the mechanical element, and expression, or the spiritual element.

Orthoepy treats of articulation, syllabi-

cation and accent. Articulation gives their proper sounds to vowels and consonants; syllabication regulates the distinct utterance of syllables; while accent is the special stress or force given to a syllable in a pollysyllabic word.

NOTE. Violations of orthoepy are unfortunately sometimes committed in the pulpit. *An'* is heard for *and*, *vide* for *wide*, *virchoo* for *virtue;* so also, *extr'orn'ry* for *extraordinary*, *mis'rable* for *miserable*, etc.

Expression is taken here to mean the perfect vocal conveyance of thought and feeling. Its agencies are: emphasis, inflection, modulation, slur, monotone, personation, and pauses. As it does not fall within the scope of this work to teach the principles of elocution, I will not occupy the reader's time by explaining these different elements of vocal expression. Any standard treatise on the art of speaking will give the student all necessary information about them; but he must remember, that the fullest knowledge of the principles and rules of elocution is useless without practice. For this a teacher is almost a necessity, as it is very difficult to learn from books alone how most of the excercises are to be performed.

Still practise by one's self can do much, if it be slow, regular, and graduated. The mere effort to vary the voice according to the laws of expression, even though unsuccessful, is a step toward perfection.

2. Gesture. There is no good preaching without gesture. It is as necessary to a sermon as correct pronunciation, emphasis, or modulation. It should be natural, graceful, appropriate, and, above all, *Unconscious.* In ideal gesture, the movement of the hand or other member should be as little attended to as the movement of the breath or the action of the vocal organs. Hence, gesture ought to be practised every day until it becomes a second nature. But by what standard of gesture is the young preacher to be guided? Delsarte's system seems to be the best, because it is the least conventional and is the only one, as far as I know, that is grounded on the natural laws of expression. We must, however, distinguish carefully between the fundamental principles of Delsarte's theory and their development by his disciples. Moreover, it is necessary to remember that those principles were intended as a basis for

music and the drama as well as for oratory; much judgment is, therefore, required to adapt them wisely for the guidance of bodily motion and expression in preaching.

Physical exercise is as important as the study of gesture to acquire that easy, graceful movement of the body, so necessary for good delivery. Walking and dumb-bell practice are the two most useful forms in which physical exercise can be taken. A good walker is always a graceful walker; and it will be to the young preacher's advantage to study and imitate his poise and carriage. Dumb-bell practice gives freedom, suppleness and grace to the movements of the arms and torso. It should be performed regularly, and the bells used should be light, as the object to be attained is not to acquire the muscular development of a prizefighter. This exercise, however, should be backed up with the practice of using the hands and arms gracefully. In the pulpit these members will move with ease and propriety or stifly and awkwardly, just as we have previously trained them by assiduous practice.

Until a young preacher feels confident

that he has mastered any particular form of gesture — concentric, eccentric, normal — he should not attempt to use it in the pulpit. It is much better to be natural and earnest until, without conscious effort, he can be something better.

The study of gesture and of elocution generally has a tendency to make one's manner in the pulpit appear self-conscious and affected. Even some preachers have the bad taste of delivering their sermons with tricks and movements belonging to the stage. They start back; crouch in fear; spring up in rage,— reminding one forcibly of an immemorial street performance in which the domestic troubles of a married couple are represented. They profane the pulpit who preach to win applause — to gratify personal vanity. What a contrast between them striking theatrical attitudes and St. Ambrose, thrilled with the Spirit of God, preaching that sermon which converted the young Manichean rhetorician into the greatest of the church Fathers! But apart from the few who make the pulpit subservient to unworthy ends, there are many earnest, wholesouled young preachers

who like them appear to preach "for effect" by the self-consciousness and artificiality of their gestures. These must bear in mind that perfection in preaching is attained only by slow growth: hence they should observe the good old maxim, — *festina lente.* They should also practise assiduously in private the ordinary gestures appropriate to the pulpit; but until they can perform them naturally, gracefully, and spontaneously, it will be wisest for them to confine themselves, while preaching, to the impromptu movements which their earnest words and their ardent zeal for souls will suggest.

Students can gain much practical knowledge of elocution and delivery from listening to eminent preachers and orators, and noting carefully the unconscious grace and propriety of their gestures, their distinct articulation, their perfect inflection and modulation of voice, with the other details that go to make up an accomplished speaker. Indeed, few things would be of greater advantage to seminarians than to hear such men from time to time in the seminary halls.

CHAPTER V.

Systematic Teaching of Religion.

As I have already said, the subject of all Christian preaching is, directly or indirectly, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. *I judged not myself,* says St. Paul writing to the Corinthians, *to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ; and Him crucified.* And St. John in the Apocalypse: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*

The Church leaves her ministers free to choose their own method of treating this subject. If they select for their theme some revealed doctrine or duty, the method is called topical. If they take the Gospel or Epistle and expound and apply it verse after verse, their discourse is called a homily and the method homiletic. Finally, the catechetical method is the systematic teaching of religion according to the order of the catechism or of theology.

I prefer this last method, partly because it is the only one of the three that is scientific, and partly because it is the only one suited to the exigencies of Catholics in this country. This latter reason needs some explanation.

Our American Catholic laity have in our time an opportunity of doing apostolic work on a grander scale and with more hopeful prospects of influencing the destinies of the human race than any other people in any other time or country since the establishment of the Church.

What is this opportunity? It is, first of all, the opportunity of example, — of showing their fellow citizens, by daily life and conduct, the beauty, the consistency, the truth and happiness of practical Catholic faith. Americans of all religious denominations are sick of mere lip-worship, of hollow forms and shams, of whited sepulchres. They crave for a religion of the heart, grounded on a solid basis of truth; and they wait to see it preached, not in words alone, but in actions, — sincere, uniform, unpretentious actions, — to embrace and practise it themselves. Now the Cath-

olic Church here in America supplies such a religion; but the preaching of it to outsiders is entrusted by divine Providence chiefly to the laity, not from the conventional pulpit, but in the home, in the workshop, in the railway-car,—in every place of social and business intercourse. Wherever there is a Catholic layman, there is a Catholic pulpit, from which an influence may go out, more potent for good and wider in its sphere than much of our formal preaching.

Our laity has another opportunity intimately connected with this just mentioned. It is to give an intelligent, satisfactory account of their faith to sincere inquirers. Outsiders have traditional prejudices against us, supported by misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Many of them wonder how such an accumulation of idolatry, superstition, craft, duplicity, etc., as they think us, can have held together so long. But, side by side with those prejudices, is a suspicion, a dread, that after all we may be in the right. They know well how easy it is to start a falsehood, and how hard it is to stop it in its mischievous course. May not all they have been hearing about Catholics

since their childhood be such a falsehood? At least, they think it worth their while to inquire; and they will inquire, if they are acquainted with a practical Catholic whose truth and honesty and sterling worth have won for him confidence and respect with all who know him. And that inquiry implies not only the working of divine grace in those men's souls; but it implies also a special economy of divine Providence, by which their conversion and salvation are made to depend very much on the ability of that Catholic layman to give them a satisfactory explanation of the teaching of the Church. This he will be able to do only by following closely a continuous, systematic course of sermons on Christian faith and duty. Hence the necessity of the American pastor giving such a course.

The conditions of American social life, then, seem to demand that Catholics be instructed systematically in their religion. The advanced education of the people demands the same. Theology, as the scientific development of faith, is, in its inception and progress, the work of the Holy Spirit, intended to meet a natural, legiti-

mate craving of the educated intellect. The same craving exists in the popular American mind; and, to satisfy it, we are clearly bound to systematize and connect in a definite, consistent, beautiful whole our doctrinal and moral teaching of the people. This is particularly necessary for those business people who have precise, well-arranged ideas on other matters, and who feel real pain not to have similar ideas on religion. They are themselves much to blame for their bewilderment, because they do not give to their spiritual interests any of that serious thought, of that patient study which they devote to their ledger and bank-book. Yet the pastor is not wholly blameless who does not give those men a comprehensive grasp of the essential means of salvation. Our divine Lord on many occasions condensed into a few words "the whole law and the prophets." We shall produce much more abundant fruit than we do, if we imitate Him in this as well as in other characteristics of His teaching.

The Third Council of Baltimore earnestly advises priests "to give a connected and thorough presentation of Christian doctrine

either in the order of the Roman Catechism, or in that of the catechism of the diocese, or of any approved author." The fathers of the council did not wish to interfere with the liberty of preachers by imposing on them any formal precept regarding the choice or sequence of subjects; yet, for all zealous priests, the united exhortation of their bishops assembled in synod will have the directive influence of a law, especially when the exhortation results from intimate knowledge of the requirements of the people.

NOTE. I admit freely that the homily on the Sunday Gospel or Epistle was the most ancient form of preaching. It is also in stricter accordance with the spirit of the liturgy than either the topical or the catechetical sermon. But neither its antiquity nor its greater harmony with the public prayer of the Church can at all weigh against the exigencies of modern Catholic life. Besides, in the early and medieval ages of the Church, — in fact, down to the German-English revolt of the sixteenth century,— the mysteries of faith were taught not by preaching alone, but by the language of symbols, not during half an hour once a week, but by magnificent ceremonial celebrations, frequently continued through several days. In those times, in addition to the fifty-two Sundays of the year, nearly forty festivals, with their vigils and octaves, were celebrated, not to commemorate but to represent the mysteries and effects of Redemption. In our days, on the contrary, when symbolic religious teaching is no lon-

ger the powerful agency it was, its place must be supplied by some other means; and no other seems so fitting or practicable as the systematic course of sermons here recommended.

At the outset of this course, we should inspire our people with deep reverence and with filial confidence, obedience and love toward the Church which we represent in the pulpit. We should explain to them clearly and forcibly, that it is an active, organic, divinely endowed being that has been living and working in the world since Jesus Christ called it into existence, and shall continue to live on and to work on to the end of time; that it saw Him its Creator in the flesh, witnessed His miracles, listened to His teaching, stood by at His death, conversed with Him after His Resurrection, gazed in awe at His divine Person ascending into Heaven. We should make a rapid survey of its action on the human race after its baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire on the day of Pentecost; its conflict with Judaism, paganism, philosophy; its victory over the Roman empire — the world's stronghold of error; its conversion of the savage hordes that swept down on southern Europe in the fifth and succeeding centuries; its formation

of Christian society; its struggle with error and passion from Luther's revolt down to the present day. We should bring out clearly the identity of the Catholic priest with that world-wide, undying, theandric creation of God for the regeneration and salvation of the human race. Its commission to teach and save is his commission; its authority is his authority. He can say with truth: "The Catholic Church that I represent and whose voice I am, is the divinely appointed teacher of the nations, and her message of salvation all are bound to hear. — That message I now deliver to you. He that hears her, speaking by her accredited minister, hears Jesus Christ; and he that despises her, while so speaking, despises Him whose commission she discharges."

NOTE. It does not follow from what is said here, that a pastor, teaching his people, is infallible in all he teaches. He may misunderstand, or exaggerate, or minimize, or even falsify the doctrines of revelation; but if he do so, consciously or unconsciously, he does not, as far as he leads others into error, represent either Jesus Christ or His Church. Yet, notwithstanding this possibility, the people can have no prudent doubt that he is a faithful exponent of divine revelation, as long as he is delegated to preach by his bishop, who himself is in communion with the vicar of Christ, the supreme and infallible head of the Church.

When a pastor has made clear to his people his delegated authority to teach them all things necessary for salvation, he should in his next sermon give a summary of those things in the order of the catechism. This summary should itself be often summarized throughout the course, so that the relation of each truth or duty explained to the whole body of revelation may be easily comprehended.

In the first series of sermons on Christian doctrine, clearness, brevity, progressive movement, freshness of presentment and, above all, unction should give a growing interest to our words as we proceed. Hence, minute details should be reserved for the next series. Each sermon should glow with fervent sentiments springing from our spiritual conception of the theme. Much solid instruction must be conveyed, of course; but it must be conveyed in an emotional, rather than in an intellectual, form. Unmoved ourselves, we may speak fluently, without moving others, of the attributes of God, of the Incarnation, of the Sacraments; but if we bring them home to ourselves as living, present realities, if we

set them side by side with those other realities that press upon our physical and social life, such as light, air, food, home, friends, etc., we must be filled with amazement and awe, with fear vanishing into ecstasy, somewhat like men, introduced blindfolded into a gorgeous palace, when the bandage is taken from their eyes and they gaze on the undreamt magnificence around them. So should we feel and with such feeling should we speak the revealed truths we announce. After hearing us, the people should go away so enraptured with the majesty and power and goodness of God, with the wealth of grace offered them in the Sacraments, with the ineffable bliss in store for them, that, for the time being at least, the human interests of life would be pushed far into the background, sin would be unbearable, and the vision of faith would appear the only source of true happiness.

NOTE. By frequent repetitions, allusions and digressions, in our sermons we ought to make our hearers familiar with the real though invisible world of faith in which we live. *Justus meus ex fide vivit.* Life in its fullness is scarcely possible without contact and familiarity with its surroundings.

After the first course of sermons on the catechism has been preached, a pastor will

go over the same ground, giving fuller details of doctrine and duty, explaining and refuting popular objections, and especially animating the audience to a higher standard of Christian living corresponding to the brighter vision of faith which they receive.

When divine truth is thus systematically explained in a setting of appropriate sentiments, affections and resolutions, it irradiates the soul of the listener, satisfies his spiritual longings, and brings him nearer to his Saviour. It gives him, too, a deep practical interest in the promotion of Catholic missions, in the spread of Catholic literature, in the triumph of Catholic truth. He defends religion with modesty, but also with confidence and zeal, whenever he hears it misrepresented or insulted. Unlike so many of our people who scarcely come in contact with the Church except in the Sunday Mass and the paschal Communion, this man shares to the fullest in her world-wide life and work; his heart beats in unison with hers in her triumphs as in her sufferings, in her head as in her members, in her mission to the South Sea Islander as in her ministry at home in his native parish.

CHAPTER VI.

Definite Object of Sermon.

A lawyer pleading for a prisoner has a definite object in view, — to persuade the jury to return a verdict of "Not guilty." Every word in his address, every argument, every motive, every appeal to the feelings, every gesture, every inflection and intonation of the voice, — all are confined to this one object and directed by it.

So too, a party orator, at election time, in his speech to a meeting of citizens, has one clear, distinct object in view, — to gain their votes. He does not fatigue them with a dissertation on political economy; he does not ramble into side issues; he does not use learned words or balanced sentences; nor does he pose as a professor of elocution; he places himself in speech and manner on a level with his hearers, enters into their thoughts and feelings, takes advantage of their weaknesses, coaxes, flatters, rouses, entreats, — in a word, leaves no stone un-

turned to secure them effectually for his party.

Even in everyday life, in the ordinary intercourse of man with man, whenever speech is used for the purpose of persuasion, there is of necessity before the speaker's mind one definite, practical, central object, which he is resolved to achieve by clear, earnest, cumulative reasoning combined with all the varied resources with which eloquence moves the will to action. No useless word is spoken; there is no listlessness or apathy of manner;—nothing but intense, concentrated, impassioned earnestness.

As it is with the lawyer, the party orator, —everyone who would persuade another,— so should it be with a preacher of the Word. His direct, conscious aim, even before he selects or studies his theme, ought to be to bring home some distinct spiritual good to his hearers. To do this ought to be his primary end in preaching, — an end to which everything in his sermon should be conducive and secondary. To talk from the pulpit without zeal and without preparation, solely because it is one's turn to

preach; to memorize and deliver some brilliant passages in a setting of commonplaces, for the admiration of a few cultured people in the congregation; to translate arguments and answers to objections from Perrone or Hurter, and deliver them over the heads of the people: — none of these performances has any title to be called preaching. They may, perhaps, instruct, and even please; but they do not move, — at least, in the direction of spiritual action, — because the preacher has before his mind no definite practical end to which he would guide and urge his hearers. As I have already said, preaching is essentially a persuasive popular discourse; and to be persuasive, it must use every available means to move the will to take some onward step toward salvation. This onward step, by which each sermon is individualized, is what I understand by the definite object.

In a doctrinal sermon, the definite object is the spiritual impression of some revealed truth. A child listening to an explanation of the Seventh Commandment with its hand in another child's pocket stealing whatever it finds there, has no spiritual im-

pression made on it by the speaker's words. Its conscience is not touched. It does not make the knowledge it receives personal, regulative, corrective. So, too, doctrinal knowledge must not be merely intellectual and impersonal. It must touch the heart and conscience; it must cause remorse for sin and dissatisfaction with one's self on account of it, if not repentance; it must be even for a hardened sinner a bright vision of a higher life which he contrasts in sadness with the groveling life he is leading.

It is difficult to stamp on the soul this spiritual impression of dogmas and mysteries; nay, it is not only difficult but impossible, if the preacher be not a spiritual man. But if he meditate on them for his own profit, and if he live habitually in the higher sphere of which they are the light and atmosphere, with earnest preparation he may confidently hope that the Holy Spirit will supply whatever his words may be too weak to impart. The broken expressions of a soul, awe-stricken, believing, adoring, loving, in the presence of some unfathomable mystery, will do more spiritual good than the most learned disquisitions of theology on the subject.

The definite object of a moral sermon will usually be some particular practical resolution regarding Christian duty,—the acquisition of some virtue, the avoidance of some vice, the fulfillment of some precept, the practice of some special devotion. A resolution is practical when it is adapted to the person on whom it is urged. It should not require extraordinary graces for its fulfillment; and it should not seek to raise one to a perfection foreign to one's state. Faith, hope, charity, prayer, religion, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, — these with the vices opposed to them supply an abundant source of practical resolutions for all classes.

It is not enough, however, that a resolution, to be the definite object of a sermon, be practical; it should also be particular; that is, it should not extend to all the offices of a virtue or to all the branches of a vice, but confine itself to one, so that it may be kept by the uniform repetition or omission of the same act.

The object aimed at in a sermon may be definite in either of two ways, it may be explicitly enunciated, explained, and enforced; or it may be a conclusion which the

preacher leaves to be drawn by the audience from well established premises. In other words, the object of a sermon may be explicitly or implicitly definite; but in either case, the preacher must have clearly and explicitly before his mind what impression he intends to produce. I am convinced that, as a general rule, the definite object ought to be, not a conclusion left to the hearers to draw, but a conclusion drawn for them, formally announced to them, and explained and enforced with apostolic directness. The only exception to this rule that I would admit is the rare case in which an audience is wholly averse to the adoption of the definite object; so much so, indeed, that the preacher deems it useless, if not harmful, to propose it. What is to be done? Simply to lead such an audience by reasoning and persuasion to a practical conclusion in which the definite object aimed at is logically contained. Leave reason illumined by divine grace to do the rest.

NOTE. Of course, it is supposed that the audience is in good faith, or, at least, is not aware of the gravity of some obligation which has to be pointed out to them. The obligation of severing connection with certain secret societies may be given as an example.

Although the definite object should influence every part of a sermon, yet it should not be announced formally until the preacher feels sure of its acceptance. However open to persuasion, men do not take kindly to coercion in any form, especially to coercion of the will. "Should," "ought," "must," and words of similar import drive the mind instinctively into an attitude of resistance, and should therefore be very sparingly used.

A definite object kept steadily before the mind will save the preacher from the not unusual mistake of exhorting his hearers to take various resolutions in the same sermon. If he persuade them effectively to take one resolution, he has done all that should be done; and if he attempt more he is doomed to certain disappointment. There is waste of energy not only in crowding all the precepts of the Decalogue into one sermon; but also in trying within the same space to enforce all the duties comprised in the full observance of any one virtue.

Although the definite object should influence every part of a sermon, its influence should be generally indirect rather than

direct. It should make the introduction attractive and interesting, the exposition and illustration not only clear and luminous, but suffused with emotion, and the conclusion fervid, impassioned, practical, irresistible. It is primarily not an announcement to be made to the audience, but a guide to the preacher in what he is to announce and how he is to announce it. While, then, his thoughts and their arrangement are to be regulated by it, there is no need of frequently interrupting their sequence by giving it formal expression. Yet the deepening emotion excited in the progress of his discourse should become towards the end more and more suggestive of the definite object.

It is not always easy for a preacher to overcome the temptation of introducing some brilliant rhetorical passage, illustrative or emotional, that may, indeed, be suggested by his theme, but does not run in the direction of the definite object. Singleness of purpose, zeal for souls, and a keen sense of responsibility will save the preacher from this temptation. The wandering eye takes uncertain aim; and the

priest largely influenced by human motives in preaching will seldom impress a practical resolution on the minds of his hearers. He will please and, perhaps, try to convince, because his self-seeking view could not otherwise be satisfied; but his effort to persuade will be slight and ineffectual, because other objects of greater import engage his attention.

NOTE. I do not object to *secondary* human motives in preaching, provided they support higher motives for the attainment of the definite object. But motives that make a preacher shrink from minute details, from strong direct language when necessary, and from apostolic earnestness as bad form, — such motives cannot be too severely condemned.

A preacher may not think formally of the definite object and yet he will seek to attain it if he earnestly endeavor to make his words spiritually helpful to his hearers. In this case, however, there is a danger that having determined on no practical issue at the beginning of his sermon, he will through most of it talk vague, pointless generalities; and when he comes to make a special application to conduct of the matter he has expounded, he will find that much of it has little or no bearing on the resolution he desires to urge. Besides, he is

liable to propose not one but several definite objects, thereby overtaxing his hearers' attention and dissipating his own available energies. I find many sermons, otherwise eloquent, wanting in unity and pointedness of application, and in every instance I can trace the reason of the want to the absence of a definite object.

ILLUSTRATION. I open the first sermon-book that comes to hand and without much trouble I find the following conclusion of a sermon on the Mission of the Holy Ghost: "Let us, then, to-day, on this glorious feast of His manifestation, be renewed in our devotion to the Holy Ghost; let us henceforth carefully avoid all that could grieve this Spirit of love, and especially all impurity, whether in thought, word, or deed — this sin which most of all defiles His sacred temple — and let us invoke Him in all our necessities. Thus He will continue to dwell in our hearts, adorn them with His virtues and gifts in this life, and in union with the Father and the Son, will be the source and the object of our eternal happiness. Amen." Here the avoidance of impurity in thought, word, or deed is the definite object, which is supposed to be attained by the exposition of two truths: 1. The mission of the Holy Ghost in general; 2. His special mission on the feast of Pentecost. A glance through the sermon shows that the preacher neither in setting out nor in the development of his subject had any idea of turning his hearers from impurity. He gives a dry, cold, learned disquisition on the Third Divine Person, and then, apparently for form's sake, tags to it a moral exhortation. This is not preaching.

I regard this close adherence to a definite object of such vital importance, that I quote here at some length the words said about it by the greatest ecclesiastical writer of this century. In his lecture on University Preaching, Cardinal Newman says:

"As a marksman aims at the target and its bull's-eye, and at nothing else, so the preacher must have a definite point before him, which he has to hit. So much is contained for his direction in this simple maxim, that duly to enter into it and use it is half the battle; and if he mastered nothing else, still if he really mastered as much as this, he would know all that was imperative for the due discharge of his office.

"For what is the conduct of men who have one object definitely before them, and one only? Why, that whatever be their skill, whatever their resources, greater or less, to its attainment all their efforts are simply, spontaneously, visibly, directed. This cuts off a number of questions sometimes asked about preaching, and extinguishes a number of anxieties. . . . . We ask questions perhaps about diction, elocution, rhetorical power; but does the commander of a besieging force dream of holiday displays, reviews, mock engagements, feats of strength, or trials of skill, such as would be graceful and suitable on a parade ground when a foreigner was to be received and *feted;* or does he aim at one and one thing only, viz., to take the strong place? Display dissipates the energy, which for the object in view needs to be concentrated and condensed. We have no reason to suppose that the Divine blessing follows the lead of human accomplishments. Indeed, St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, who made

much of such advantages of nature, contrasts the persuasive words of human wisdom 'with the showing of the Spirit,' and tells us, that 'the kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power.'

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"On these grounds I would go on to lay down a precept, which I trust is not extravagant, when allowance is made for the preciseness and the point which are unavoidable in all categorical statements upon matters of conduct. It is, that preachers should neglect everything whatever besides devotion to their one object, and earnestness in pursuing it, till they in some good measure attain to these requisites. Talent, logic, learning, words, manner, voice, action, all are required for the perfection of a preacher; but 'one thing is necessary,' — an intense perception and appreciation of the end for which he preaches, and that is, to be the minister of some definite spiritual good to those who hear him. Who could wish to be more eloquent, more powerful, more successful than the Teacher of the Nations? yet who more earnest, who more natural, who more unstudied, who more self-forgetting than He?"

CHAPTER VII.

Form of a Sermon.

The form of a sermon may signify the arrangement of thought in it, or the style most suitable to express that thought appropriately. Hence in this chapter I will treat summarily of (1) the arrangement and (2) the style of a sermon.

1. A sermon, like all other forms of discourse, has three main elements, the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. To follow out the idea of growth which, as I have already stated, is essential to every sermon, the introduction corresponds with the root of a tree, while the body and the conclusion correspond with the trunk and the ripened fruit. In other words, the main thought is announced in the introduction; it is developed in the body of the sermon; and it is applied for the guidance of life or conduct in the conclusion.

This organic unity, essential as it is, does not always characterize sermons that we

hear or read. Frequently the parts have but slight cohesion, and even that seems forced and factitious. The reason seems to be, that training in logical clearness and sequence of thought is not considered a necessary preparation for preaching. The undisciplined mind takes the bit between the teeth and carries us out of the straight course into thickets and quagmires, or, at best, into by-ways of thought; and when we return exhausted, we find that it is time to conclude, although we have supplied little or no basis on which a practical resolution can be grounded.

NOTE. The ordinary Sunday sermon, well prepared and delivered, produces more than the spiritual effect directly intended; it has besides an educational value in the mental training of our people and in the ever increasing store of knowledge supplied by it. We may have no mission to teach purely intellectual truth; but we have a mission to develop, refine, and elevate the intellect by teaching revealed truth in such an orderly, suggestive, and inspiring manner that the soul will be raised by it to the highest plane of thought, and the purpose and relations of the universe will be seen with a fullness, a clearness, a certainty beyond the reach of human science.

As I shall speak hereafter in detail on each of the main elements of a sermon, I will give here only a few general principles

regarding them. The introduction usually bears the relation of contrast to the body of the sermon. If this be the development of a general truth, that is some particular fact, example, illustration, or parable, containing it in concrete form. On the other hand, if the body of the sermon treat of some particular duty — a precept of the Decalogue or a Sacrament — the introduction will be a general statement giving the class to which the duty belongs.

Illustration. Bourdaloue in his sermon on the Character of Grace, begins by explaining the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman: *If thou didst know the gift of God.* "This gift of God which the Samaritan woman did not know is the grace of God — a precious gift which we do not know, or care to know, sufficiently. Hence it is, that we often receive it in vain. It is, then, important that I should give you a just idea of it; and this is what I will endeavor to do in the present discourse."

The same preacher begins his sermon on Idleness (a particular vice) with the general statement: "There are three kinds of justice which God may exercise toward us: vin-

dicative justice; legal justice; distributive justice. Of this last I will not speak. The vindicative justice of God repairs man's sin by labor; it is also by labor that His legal justice regulates all the states and conditions of life. Idleness is opposed to this two-fold justice."

The soul must see before it acts; and as action (external or internal — the definite object) is the end of every sermon, it is essential that we should show the nature, necessity, advantages of what we urge before we can expect any result from our preaching. The body of the sermon is taken up with this explanation, or exposition. Unlike other forms of exposition, this must appeal to the whole soul, not to the understanding alone. Its end is not to make the soul see; but to make it, through seeing, to determine on some line of action that we point out and urge. Hence exposition must be persuasive, that is, it must not only enlighten the soul, but it must interest, attract, and move it. This may not seem practicable in definitions and divisions; but even these may be given with such clearness and simplicity, with such earnest-

ness and wealth of illustration, that they will arouse absorbing interest in our theme and prepare the way for the motives by which the soul is more immediately influenced.

The persuasive element in the body of a sermon will be ineffectual unless the preacher keeps constantly looking into the soul of his audience, noting its movements, and adapting his words to them, by repetition or fuller illustration of what has been already said or by passing on to another branch of the theme. This habit of keeping in touch with the soul of an audience is one of the surest signs of the oratorical instinct. Yet, though it comes not by nature, it may be acquired,—as indeed may everything else necessary for the preaching of the Word,—by zeal and earnestness.

The conclusion of a sermon sums up what has been said in the course of it, applies it to the regulation of life or conduct, and enforces the application by a last appeal to the feelings or the will. The only general remark to be made on this part of a discourse is, that the application of the truth expounded should be obvious. The soul is

moved only by what it sees; and if it does not see the connection between the truth and the practical resolution grounded on it, the sermon will bear no fruit.

2. As to the style, or verbal form of a sermon, something has been said already; but a few additional remarks will not be out of place here.

Conversation is the ideal of all written prose composition. We speak to be understood by others; and we write to be understood by others. The end, then, being the same, the essential means should also be the same. This is particularly true of composition intended for delivery. The people expect us to speak to them the honest convictions that regulate our own lives; and they expect us to speak those convictions in a direct, simple, energetic way, not from book or manuscript, but with the fulness of divine knowledge with which they credit us.

The form of composition, then, required in a sermon is the conversational. What is implied in this? First of all: clear, simple, idiomatic language, — diction, phraseology, forms of sentences,—familiar to the people.

The thought we have to convey is difficult enough: let us not make it more difficult by using long, learned words. Our people do not balance their phrases or clauses, nor do they speak in periods or well rounded sentences; let us, then, avoid all such artificial forms of speech.

NOTE. "The dignity of the pulpit" is often pleaded as an excuse for the use of bookish terms and phrases. This implies that homely words and idioms are undignified, or, at least, unbecoming the pulpit. I can find no trace of this doctrine in our divine Lord's discourses or in the preaching of His apostles. Neither do I find it in the practice of apostolic men. Take for example St. Bernard. Although a good latinist, to make himself understood, he did not hesitate to use the following barbarous terms: Abarricanus, galabrinum, grangia, isembrunum, maneries, palefridus, etc. As I take it for granted that a priest is an educated, refined gentleman, it is unnecessary to mention that he should never use slang or vulgarisms.

The conversational style suited to a sermon implies, in the second place, that the thought conveyed should be, as far as possible, simple and direct. The teaching contained in the Catechism includes everything necessary to be known in order to be saved. — Do not go outside the Catechism, then, for your subjects. Define, develop, illustrate, enforce those you find there, and you

will have ample field for the exercise of the highest oratorical powers. Let your teaching be direct; that is, go straight to the pith of your subject, keep close to first principles, draw a sharp separating line between essentials and non-essentials, precepts and counsels, certain and uncertain obligations. There is a tendency to exaggeration in most preachers which, confined within its proper limits, is not only allowable but useful, as it suffuses abstract truth with feeling and emotion. When that tendency, however, leads a preacher to raise a pious belief into a dogma of faith, or to extend the limits of a defined dogma without warrant, or to insist on works of supererogation as if they were of precept,— it then becomes a source of grave injury if not of ruin to the audience.

Thirdly, the conversational style of a sermon requires that we speak to the thoughts, difficulties, doubts, objections, that are agitating the minds of our hearers as they listen to our words. They have no opportunity of giving expression to what they think or feel; therefore we must divine it either from what our thought naturally and

obviously suggests or from the expressions of the faces around us.

Illustration. In his "Discourses to Mixed Congregations" Cardinal Newman frequently interrupts the onward movement of his thought to answer objections likely to occur to the minds of his hearers. Sometimes, when he wishes to make his answer particularly emphatic, especially if it be a division of his discourse, he amplifies the objection and puts it in as strong language as an adversary could wish. We have the following example of this in his discourse on the Mystery of Divine Condescension:

"And now that I have set before you, my brethren, in human language, some of the attributes of the Adorable God, perhaps you are tempted to complain that, instead of winning you to the All-glorious and All-good, I have but repelled you from Him. You are tempted to exclaim, — He is so far above us that the thought of Him does but frighten me; I cannot believe that He cares for me. I believe firmly that He is infinite perfection; and I love that perfection, not so much indeed as I could wish, still in my measure I love it for its own sake, and I

wish to love it above all things, and I well understand that there is no creature but must love it in its measure, unless he has fallen from grace. But there are two feelings, which, alas, I have a difficulty in entertaining; I believe and I love, but without fervor, without keenness, because my heart is not kindled by hope, nor subdued and melted with gratitude. Hope and gratitude I wish to have, and have not; I know that He is loving towards all His works, but how am I to believe that He gives to me personally a thought, and cares for me for my own sake? I am beneath His love; He looks at me as an atom in a vast universe. He acts by general laws, and if He is kind to me it is, not for my sake, but because it is according to His nature to be kind. And hence it is that I am drawn over to sinful man with an intenser affection than to my glorious Maker. Kings and great men upon earth, when they appear in public, are not content with a mere display of their splendor, they show themselves as well as their glories; they look around them; they notice individuals; they have a kind eye, or a courteous

gesture, or an open hand, for all who come near them. They scatter among the crowd the largess of their smiles and of their words. And then men go home, and tell their friends, and treasure up to their latest day, how that so great a personage took notice of them, or of a child of theirs, or accepted a present at their hand, or gave expression to some sentiment, without point in itself, but precious as addressed to them. Thus does my fellow-man engage and win me; but there is a gulf between me and my great God. I shall fall back on myself, and grovel in my nothingness, till He looks down from heaven, till He calls me, till He takes interest in me. It is a want in my nature to have one who can weep with me, and rejoice with me, and in a way minister to me; and this would be presumption in me, and worse, to hope to find in the Infinite and Eternal God."

A fourth requisite of conversational style is frequent repetition of an important thought, not only to make sure of driving it home, but also to give it time when driven home to settle in the mind. I will treat on this very important requisite in a future chapter.

Fifthly, the interrogative form of sentence is frequently used in animated conversation: it should, therefore, characterize the style of a sermon. Interrogation is of two kinds, literal and figurative. The former expects an answer, the latter does not, but rather gives force to a statement or assertion. This figurative kind is generally used in a series of sentences arranged in climactic order. It is very effective when there is a real climax of thought; otherwise it becomes mere declamation. For this reason, fluent speakers have to use it with great caution.

Example from Father Burke's sermon on "Our Catholic Young Men:"

"Now, my friends, if America cannot go on without intelligence and manhood and energy, I ask you, is it not the interest of America to see who it is that can supply her most intelligence and most energy? . . . . . Will it do for America to have her young men infidels? laughing and scoffing at all religion? laughing and scoffing at the idea of the immortality of the soul of man, of eternal reward in Heaven, of eternal punishment in Hell? Will this do for America? If the merchants and the statesmen, the governors and the magistrates, and the workingmen of this land are to become infidels, if they are to lose all faith by reading bad, infidel books, if they are to laugh at the idea of a future state of punishment or reward, are they likely to be honester men for this? Is the national property

safer in their hands? Are they likely to be better merchants, more reliable, more trustworthy? Tell me — suppose you have to deal with two men, and you want to intrust your money to one of them; and one told you there was no devil, no hell, nor heaven, and that he very much questioned if there was a God, for he has been reading in his youth bad books, which completely upset his faith; and the other told you that he believed in God, and heaven, and hell, and said: 'I believe, myself, that I shall be in heaven or hell for all eternity — I believe I shall be in one place or the other, according to the way I behave myself in the world;' to which of these young men would you intrust your money? Would you give your money to the fellow that told you: 'I don't believe in anything; if I choose to rob you, there is no hell to punish me;' or to the man who said: 'I believe in God, and that, if I rob you of your money I shall go to hell for it.'?"

In conversation, an incident is best told in dramatic form; that is, instead of giving in our own words the substance of something said, we personate the speaker, giving his words and representing his manner and action as faithfully as possible. The imitation of manner and action would, of course, be out of place in the pulpit; but the dramatic style of composition gives much liveliness to a narrative, relieves the hearer's mental strain, and disposes him to give closer attention to the thought illustrated or enforced.

The conversational style of a sermon does not exclude figurative language; on the contrary, when the thought is emotional or impassioned, figurative language is its only natural form of expression. Even the uneducated become figurative under the influence of strong feeling. It need not be feared, then, that the conversational style will prevent the preacher from attempting those lofty flights of oratorical expression, supposed by many to be the surest test of "eloquence." What it does forbid, though, is the bad taste of using the figurative language of high-wrought feeling to express plain, passionless thought.

A last recommendation to a young preacher: If you find it difficult to adopt the conversational style in writing your sermons, imagine you have one of your audience before you. Think what you would say to him, and how you would say it: 1) to make him understand the matter about which you speak to him; 2) to give him time to turn it over in his mind; 3) to interest him in it; 4) to answer his objections; 5) to enlist his feelings; 6) to influence his will; and 7) to carry it, as it

were, by storm, by persuading him to accept the practical resolution which was your definite object throughout. Write down as nearly as possible what you would thus say to your imaginary hearer, and your sermon will be well written. There may be some words to change, some expression to soften or strengthen, some redundancies to retrench; but the style in the main will be appropriate and substantially correct.

CHAPTER VIII.

Introduction.

In the last chapter I gave a general view of the primary elements of a sermon, namely, the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. I now come to speak of each of these in detail.

The object of the Introduction is to prepare the audience for the development of the theme. It comes first in the order of delivery, but not of composition. It is not advisable to arrange or write this part of a sermon until the matter of the other parts has been collected and put in order. Those who disregard this recommendation will usually find that their introductions introduce nothing definite, but rather suggest various vistas of thought that are apt to tempt them away from the line of development they intended to follow. Some preachers go so far as to write the body and even the conclusion of their sermons before they

write the introduction. Cicero says of his own practice: *Quod primum est dicendum, postremum soleo cogitare. Nam si quando id primum invenire volui, nullum mihi occurrit, nisi exile aut nugatorium aut vulgare atque commune.* And Quintilian adds: *Non ideo tamen, eos probaverim, qui scribendum quoque proemium novissime putant.* In this matter, however, of *writing* the introduction before or after the composition of the rest of the sermon, the preacher's own experience will be his best guide.

In a normal sermon the Introduction begins with a text of Scripture. This form of beginning dates back to the time—the fourth century—when the homily gave place to the topical or the catechetical sermon. The principles of oratory laid down by Aristotle and expounded and amplified by Cicero and Quintilian were then enlisted in the service of religion; and have ever since been followed by our greatest preachers. A primary demand of those principles is unity of thought—design—object in a sermon; and the text is intended to be the condensed expression of that unity. Besides, it gives satisfaction to the hearer to be reminded by

a well chosen text, that Catholic faith is unchangeable—the same in the twentieth century as in the first, ever the one unvaried revelation of the Spirit of God.

NOTE. A Catholic preacher needs no "credentials to his flock," except the authorization, or mission, of his ecclesiastical superior. Even though he did need it, a text of Scripture could in no sense supply it. Hence, it is unaccountable how a Catholic writer, treating of this matter, says: "In opening our sermon with a passage from Holy Writ, we, as it were, present our credentials to our flock, and proclaim our right to speak as the ambassadors of Him whose word it is, whilst at the same time we secure for ourselves and our discourse an amount of reverent attention which no mere words of ours could possibly gain." The truth is, that non-Catholics, having no ecclesiastical mission to preach, find a convenient substitute in a Bible text. Hence, to be consistent, they must allow to all who can quote one the right to speak as the ambassadors of Christ. On the contrary, the Catholic Church has her credentials to preach from the lips of our Saviour Himself. *You have not chosen me*, He says: *but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain.* Because of this divine mission, coming through apostolic succession from Jesus Christ, our preachers have never recognized any *necessity* of beginning their sermons with passages from Holy Writ. The Fathers often preached without them; and in our own time many eminent Catholic preachers do not use them.

A text should be brief; otherwise it will not be remembered and might almost as

well be omitted. Sometimes passages of considerable length are read from the Bible at the beginning of a sermon; but they cannot be regarded as texts, however useful they may be as introductions.

The meaning of a text should be easily understood by the audience. Moreover, the thought conveyed by it should stimulate interest in the theme and its development.

Another characteristic of a text is its appropriateness. It should easily suggest the line of thought to be followed by the preacher. When a process of reasoning is required to connect the text with its development and practical application, the audience will soon forget both the text and the connection. As a rule, therefore, it is not advisable to use for the opening of a sermon a Scripture passage in a factitious sense *(in sensu accommodatitio)* not intended by the inspired writer. Non-Catholic preachers who feel bound always to preach from a text have invented what are called "motto-texts" for sermons on such unbiblical themes as strikes, picnics, sewing circles, etc. I cannot conceive a Catholic priest using the inspired Word in such an unworthy fashion. In the

first place, he is under no obligation to begin sermons on those or similar topics with Scripture quotations; and, secondly, his theme on all such occasions is a particular aspect of some virtue or vice for which abundance of texts can be found.

NOTE. Dr. Phelps, in his "Theory of Preaching," approves of motto-texts, although he severely condemns the Fathers for their allegorical interpretations. According to him, a converted shoeblack may laudably preach to a crowd of strikers from the motto-text, "Strike hands" (Prov. XXII. 26), but St. Gregory the Great might not use the parable of the Talents to enforce a moral lesson. The following are his ungracious and unscholarly words: "3d. Observe, thirdly, the Romish corruption of the custom of employing texts. In this period of the history of the custom several things are noticeable. The allegorical principles of interpretation applied to the Scriptures by Origen and others after him destroyed the legitimate force of the custom. It destroyed logical connection between text and homily." The Fathers, as well as the Church in all times, have used allegorical application of Sacred Scripture for illustrative—not for argumentative—purposes; but this was done by inspired writers themselves. (See Heb. xiii. 5 and II Cor. viii. 5.)

The text should be repeated occasionally through the sermon, that it may be impressed on the memory. For the same reason, it would be well to introduce it in the conclusion and as near the end as possible. Some endeavor to finish every ser-

mon with it; but this gives an artificial tone to the peroration, and is, moreover, soon noticed as a mannerism.

In a moral sermon, the text chosen should be, as far as possible, one suffused with emotion. This kind of text awakens interest more than any other. It has, also, an inspiring effect on the preacher himself, and gives a ring of earnestness to his voice and words, which is in itself a better introduction than any set form of words.

After announcing the text, the preacher usually explains it, and in doing so deduces his theme, or the view of his subject he intends to take. This time-honored form of introduction, stereotyped by immemorial usage, is simple, easy and natural; but it is apt to appear dull and commonplace when uniformly used by a pastor Sunday after Sunday all the year round. Besides, as a text is not essential to a sermon, its explanation cannot be essential to the introduction. A preacher, then, is at full liberty to lead up to his theme in whatever way he thinks best.

Cicero tells us that the oratorical Introduction (Exordium) should make the hearers

well-disposed, attentive, and inclined to learn,—*benevolos*, *attentos*, *dociles*. Kindly feeling, attention and docility may be generally presumed in a Catholic audience. Hence, in an ordinary sermon, the introduction makes no reference to these dispositions, nor should it, in my opinion, dwell on the importance of the theme to be developed. Our people are sure to realize its importance, if we treat it competently; if we do not, it is useless to bespeak their attention in the introduction. Indeed, as a rule which covers even "set sermons," the elaborate exordium of former times is something distasteful to our American people. In their own speech they are direct and outspoken; and they expect those who address them on vital, and especially on religious, interests to be equally straightforward.

Besides the normal introduction spoken of already, many others are used by preachers. I will say a few words about those I deem the most important.

I. The *logical* introduction. This is grounded on the principle, that all teaching should advance from the known to the unknown. Hence we begin our sermon with a

brief statement of something admitted by the audience, and we then proceed to expound and apply something else logically connected with it which the audience do not know or do not fully realize. For example, if the theme of a sermon be the crime and misery of a soul that abuses the grace of God, we may lead up to it by describing an abuse of authority and position in some public official; he is dismissed in disgrace, reduced to penury, unable to work, ashamed to beg, despised and cast off by his former friends. — Life is a stewardship and at its close we shall have to account for our administration of the goods connected with it. These are of two kinds, natural and supernatural. Both will enter into the judgment of each man after death; but his heaviest responsibility will be for the latter — for all those supernatural gifts which are comprised under the name of divine grace. The crime, the misery, the blank despair of an official convicted of systematic dishonesty in the discharge of his duties, are but a faint shadow of the state of a soul convicted after death of abusing God's most precious gifts. As concrete facts are better known than re-

vealed truths, it follows that the logical introduction generally consists of some incident, example, or parable, suggestive of the theme to be expounded. Hence there should be a relation of contrast between this introduction and the body of a discourse. When the latter is the exposition and application of some doctrine, the former should be a concrete fact leading up to it; while, on the other hand, if facts, objects, persons, character, mental states and experiences form the substance of the discourse, they are best ushered in by some general, self-evident truth, of which the facts, objects, etc., may be considered definitive or illustrative.

EXAMPLE. *No thought is hidden from Thee.* (Job, xlii. 2.) "The holy man Job has expressed a truth which we, as well as he, must acknowledge, namely, that there is no thought which is hidden or unknown to God; and therefore, also, it was that Job, although he seemed to possess peace of conscience, turned to God, in order that God might point out to him and remind him of what, without his knowledge, he might be guilty. *Make me know my crimes and offences.* So, also, must we proceed when we prepare for confession." (On Examination of Conscience. Sermons from the Flemish, vol. 5.)

2. The Introduction by *insinuation.* This leads up to the theme in a circuitous, in-

direct way; because if the doctrine or duty to be developed and enforced were presented directly, it would stir up prejudices in the audience that would hinder its adequate consideration. This form of introduction, therefore, implies a particular kind of theme, namely, such as runs counter to natural feeling or acquired antipathies or, perhaps, to some sinful habit which people, for one reason or another, think not sinful at all, or, at least, not as sinful as it is in reality.

Whether, in such circumstances, we should use this indirect method of introducing our theme, or should rather follow the outspoken directness of apostolic men, depends very much, if not wholly, on the ability of the preacher. If he combine the talent of luminous and forcible exposition with the rarer and higher gift of persuasion, the latter course seems preferable; but if he distrust his powers of convincing and persuading, having reason to fear that a direct introduction of an unpopular theme will excite the audience to an attitude of opposition that no after effort of his will be able to change, then his only course is to use the introduction by insinuation. However, it

will be found that very few sermons require such roundabout form of opening. The loyalty of our people to the Church may be relied on to bear the pressure of most unpalatable truths on their preconceived notions and material interests.

This exordium is used also to excuse any apparent presumption there may be in a preacher undertaking to deal with a theme beyond his ability, or in his succeeding some popular preacher in the charge of a parish. While all protestations of self-abasement in the pulpit are odious violations of good taste, a sincere expression of diffidence in one's powers, modestly worded and delivered, have a charm in them to silence hostile criticism and to win the respectful attention of an audience.

NOTE. I have said already that a preacher can generally presume on the good will and attention of a Catholic audience. He must be careful, however, not to overstrain these dispositions. This is sometimes done by introducing a sermon with a scathing denunciation of defaulting pew-renters. A priest must speak plainly from time to time on the duty of the people to support their pastors; but it is best to do so in the form of an ordinary sermon from which all personal feelings and all narrow local allusions should be carefully excluded.

3. The *abrupt* Introduction (*exordium ex abrupto*) is an impassioned outburst of indignation, grief, joy, or other strong feeling, in the beginning of a sermon. Such introduction is justified only by some exceptional occasion — by some local or national occurrence which has moved men's souls to their lowest depths. A great scandal, for instance, has happened in a parish; there is intense excitement among the people; the pastor feels bound to denounce the crime and, as far as possible, to counteract its effects. Here the use of the abrupt introduction is appropriate, although it is questionable if it be obligatory. St. Paul, the most eloquent of the apostolic writers, seems to have preferred the ordinary form of introduction, even when he had a gross public crime to denounce and punish. In the opening of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he congratulates them on being made rich in Christ Jesus in all utterance and in all knowledge; and it is only in the fifth chapter that he deals with the scandal of public incest that had occurred amongst them.

Whatever may be said about the advis-

ability of using this introduction, even in circumstances of intensest public excitement, it undoubtedly requires much judgment and tact to determine the space to be given to it, and still more, to make an easy, natural transition from it to the body of the sermon. It is always difficult to pass from emotional to non-emotional speech; and there is a special difficulty in doing so at the beginning of a discourse, when popular excitement is intensified by the impassioned language of the preacher, and the audience, in consequence, is but little disposed to listen to the calm exposition of doctrine.

4. The *grand* Introduction starts on an elevated plane of thought. In terse, inspiring, original language it enunciates some sublime truth which is made the background or setting for the special view given of it in the development of the theme. Preachers rarely attempt this introduction, as they not only distrust their ability to continue their sermon in the strain of such an opening; and besides they know that few audiences are capable of giving sustained attention to such a discourse. Hence, they prefer to act on the principle of gradual upward progres-

sion implied in the well known maxim of Cicero — *Semper crescat augeaturque oratio.* We may conclude, then, that for all ordinary, and generally even for extraordinary occasions, it is wisest to begin modestly, and to leave the grand exordium to men like Bossuet whose majestic intellect soared without effort into the region of transcendental thought and lived in it as in its congenial atmosphere.

5. A popular kind of introduction is deduced from the body of the sermon (*ex visceribus causae*). The preacher, after collecting and arranging the matter he intends to convey, gives a general idea of it in this introduction, by telling, 1. the subject to which his theme belongs, 2. the theme itself, or the special view of the subject he intends to take, and, 3. a brief outline of his mode of treatment.

An introduction of this kind may be compared to the exhibition of a picture in dim outline, on which a strong light is thrown afterwards, bringing out every line and feature and every slightest shade of color. Such an opening has the merit of promoting clearness of comprehension in the minds of

the audience; but it has this drawback, that it satisfies their expectation too soon and thereby lessens attention and interest through the main part of the sermon. People who know from the beginning the substance of a sermon are apt to be listless regarding details of exposition, illustration, etc.

In a series of sermons such as I recommended in the fifth chapter, the introduction need be nothing more than a recapitulation of the preceding discourse with a clear, concise statement of its connexion with the present.

A few words will suffice about the qualities of an ideal introduction. According to the old rhetoricians, those qualities are appropriateness, care, modesty, and brevity. The first requires an introduction to be specially fitted to a sermon, so that it would be unsuited to any other. The second excludes from the opening of a sermon all slovenly, floundering speech, as well as all meretricious ornaments of style—periodic sentences, balanced phrases and clauses, striking figures, etc. The third demands a certain show of reverence for the audience and a sense

of diffidence in one's ability to address it. Finally, brevity saves an introduction from its most prevalent fault — tedious, prosy lengthiness.

NOTE. Young preachers are apt not only to make their introductions too long, but also to begin too far from their theme. A favorite habit of many of them is to open their sermon with the dawn of creation or the fall of our first parents. Such a beginning gives a little too much background; and, besides, it suggests the disagreeable suspicion that the sermon is going to be drearily long and commonplace. For long-winded young orators, Kleutgen thinks an heroic remedy is necessary; namely, to cut out everything they write before the announcement of their theme. *In adolescentium orationibus,* he says, *saepe omnia praecidenda sunt, quae eum locum antecedunt, ubi primum causam ipsam attingunt.* (Ars Dicendi, p. 305.)

The prefatory character of the introduction should be concealed as much as possible. It should, therefore, supply from the start suggestive and inspiring thought, and lead up to the development of the theme by such easy, natural sequence of ideas, that the transition from the one to the other would be scarcely perceived.

Among writers of Catholic sermons, Cardinal Newman is singularly happy in his introductions. There is a gentle flow of stimulating thought in them that takes hold of

the mind and carries it onward without conscious effort. Yet before they can be usefully studied as models, large allowance must be made for the difference between an American audience and such an English audience as he addressed. He spoke to the cultured intellect of his day: we for the most part preach to the toiler. The conscience of each must be approached on lines special to itself.

EXAMPLES.

(Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Text: *Who is she that cometh like unto the morning rising?*)

Introduction: "It was thus that the inspired one of the Scripture described the coming of Mary the Mother of God. He contemplated the sad night of four thousand years, and, looking towards the Orient, he saw there a vision of divine beauty rising before him, and he exclaimed: 'Who is she that cometh like unto the morning?' That was the prophet's vision, and behold we are celebrating to-day the first coming of Mary the Mother of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—the first moment of her existence, when she was conceived in her mother's womb. Behold the dawn of that day of which she was the day-star, the precursor, and the promise! Now, observe the language of the inspired one. He calls her *aurora consurgens*—the approach or first dawn of day springing up. In the order of nature, dearly beloved, the aurora or dawn gives promise, and is a sure harbinger of the day that is to follow. When a man who is keeping the night watch over his flocks

and herds in the fields, or when the sailor who stands during the night-watches at the wheel, or when any person who has to keep a vigil during the darkness turns his eyes at the approach of day towards the eastern horizon, he gathers with truth from the dawning of the morning what manner of day is to come. If, my dear brethren, on that eastern horizon he sees the early dawn and the breaking of the orient light crossed by angry clouds, if he sees there marks of atmospheric disturbances, then he concludes that the day will be stormy; but if, on the other hand, the dawn comes mild and pure, and the day-star rises limpid and beaming with undisturbed light—if he notes no cloud across the eastern vista—if no sign of angry atmosphere be there—then is such a dawn the promise of a day unclouded in the beauty and wealth of its sunshine. Even so is it in the order of grace. The dealings of God with man were divided into two great epochs, or days. The first is the day of Adam, of whom the apostle says: *The first man of the earth and earthly.* The second great epoch is the day of Jesus Christ, *the Second Man, who was from heaven and heavenly.* Of others the apostle makes no mention. He divides our history into those two great days, and thus each had an aurora, or dawning, in a woman. As soon as we turn to the first historical evidence of our race — when we turn to the East — which tells us of the origin of our being, there do we see the aurora, or dawn of our history in Eve. But scarcely does she appear on the horizon when we see hanging and clustering around her head the angry clouds of God's bitter vengeance, and we hear besides the voice of that angry God in tones of condemnation and reproach, like the mutterings of the morning thunder, and we are struck with terror to think how awful the day must be that was ushered in with so much

promise of storm and of anger. And sad surely that day has been—a day of earth, a day of sin and of darkness, of which the prophet mournfully exclaims: *There is no truth, there is no knowledge of God left in the land; cursing and lying, theft and adultery have prevailed, and behold! blood has touched blood.* But, my dear brethren, the second day is approaching, the day that will bring *the Man from heaven, heavenly*—the day that will behold God and man united in one divine Person, united in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ — the day that will behold an unclouded age, darkness dissipated, the reign of sin destroyed, and the mild sway of God's love and grace inaugurated—the day that will behold the terrible decree against man erased, the bolts of heaven withdrawn, and the golden portal open wide to us all. And this day—this day of peace, of happiness, and of benediction — had its aurora and dawn, and that dawn was in Mary, the Immaculate Mother of the Man-God. Oh! how different from the coming of the first mother, Eve." Father Burke.

(Good Friday. Text: *Christus pro nobis mortuus est.* Rom. v. 9.)

"There is a something of fascination even in the ordinary stories of human sorrow. They reach a depth which stories of human triumph cannot reach. They bring with them a deeper pathos, a sublimer meaning; and they win for those who suffer a sympathy too sacred to be lavished on anything less noble than sorrow. Take the lowliest life man ever lived; surround it, if you will, with every mean commonplace that can strip human life of the innate dignity that is in it; place a man in what servile position you will; yet if, amidst all the degradation of circumstances, you throw around him the mantle of many sorrows, he will make

his appeal to the compassion of the human heart; and his claim will be allowed, and men who never looked upon his face will drop a tear over the story of his sorrows.

"But why, on a night like this, do I stay to speak of merely human sorrow? How comes it that, with the figure of the dead Christ looming through the shadows of the Church's mourning, I dare to turn my thoughts and yours to any sorrow less sacred than the sorrow that crowned with a crown of agony, the brow of the expiring Saviour? Ah, to me the reason is obvious. It is because the human heart shrinks back instinctively from such a mystery of sorrow as we contemplate to-day. It is because, recognizing in sorrows which, compared to this, shrink into insignificance, a depth we almost fail to reach, we feel the almost hopelessness of bringing home to ourselves with anything like completeness, the history of our Saviour's Passion. We go up the hill of Calvary, as the three disciples went up Mount Thabor; as they, to see Him glorified, so we, to see Him wrapped around, with all the ignominy that came of His self-sacrifice; and we, though crying aloud like them, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here,' like them, too, veil our faces before the vision, and fall stricken to the earth by the revelation of that stupendous mystery of sorrow.

"And yet, it is not in a spirit that is all sadness we come to celebrate the Passion of our Lord. Though the Church has put aside her crimson and her gold, for the robes of mourning; though she has stripped her altars of everything of beauty that might seem a sign of joy; though she pours forth her pathetic lamentation over the blood-shedding by which she herself was purchased; yet she cannot but look to the things of great joy that lie beneath the surface. . . . .

"And why should it be otherwise? If Jesus died, did He not die to save the fallen world? If He lay in agony in Gethsemani, did He not bear up the burden of the sins of men? If hands and feet were dug and side pierced, was it not that salvation might flow out upon the world? And if He hung three hours of mortal agony upon the Cross, did He not hang there an all-atoning sacrifice for the sins of men? Yes, if the mystery of Calvary be a mystery of infinite sorrow, it is a mystery no less of infinite love." Rev. J. O'Ferrall.

(Nathanael; or, The ready Believer and his Reward. Text: *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.* John i. 50.)

"Nathanael was by nature a man free from cunning and deceit. He was a specimen of that honest and good ground of which our Saviour speaks in the parable, upon which, when the seed fell, a hundredfold harvest was produced. We have some such men about us, thank God, in this country: regular John Blunts, as we say, clear as crystal, true as the sun in the heavens. Many men are well known to us, who are upright, truthful, honest, candid, and open-hearted. You might trust them anywhere; yea, trust them to repeat a conversation without misrepresenting it, and that is saying a good deal in these times. Such people do not understand the clever arts of craft and cunning, for they do not take to them naturally, and have never been trained in the practice of policy. Speech is not to them the medium of concealing their thoughts. When they have a mind to speak, they speak their mind. You know where they are. They may have great many faults, but they have not the faults of deception and dissimulation. They are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. You know the kind of people: they

may at times speak too harshly, and hurt your feelings; they may put things in an ugly shape, and tread on people's corns; but they are as straight as a plumb-line, and you may be sure that you know them when you have heard what they say. In the end they cause far less pain to people's feelings than those who have a great deal of finesse and policy, whose words are softer than butter, but inwardly they are drawn swords. Smooth and oily tongues, with lying hearts at the back of them, are fit instruments for Satan; but truth-speaking lips, which are joined to an honest heart, are precious things which the Lord himself delights to use." C. H. Spurgeon.

(The Feast of the Precious Blood. Text: *Converse in fear during the time of your sojourning here, knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible gold or silver, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled.* I Peter i. 18.)

"Pope Pius IX, when in Gaeta, the place of his exile, in 1849, solemnly instituted the feast of the Precious Blood, for the first Sunday in July. That most sacred stream is the price of our redemption, and is poured out daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, whence it streams into the channels of the seven Sacraments, as atonement for our sins, and for our sanctification. For, as in Egypt God was propitiated by the blood of the paschal lamb, the figure of the true Lamb of God, so is He propitiated by the blood of His Son, the true Paschal Lamb; 'which speaketh better than Abel.' Heb. xii, 24. Herein is the strongest evidence of the infinite love of Jesus Christ, who not only once, but seven times, shed His precious Blood amidst the most cruel sufferings for our salvation. Let this seven-fold shedding of the Precious Blood be the subject of our present meditation." J. E. Zollner.

CHAPTER IX.

Proposition and Division.

The Introduction prepares the audience to listen with interest to the exposition of the theme. To make this exposition as clear as possible, we must begin with a short, crisp statement of what we are going to say together with an intimation more or less explicit of the order we intend to observe in saying it. This statement and the intimation of order accompanying it are called the Proposition and the Division. They may be conveyed in a few sentences; yet the wording of these demands care and skill to make them dense with thought and at the same time inspiring and suggestive.

NOTE. In recent years a distinction has been drawn between the subject and the theme of a composition. "The subject is the general or class idea on which the production is based, the most unrestricted answer to the question, What shall I write about? . . . . The theme is the subject concentrated, by means of directive limitations, upon a single issue, so that it shall contain one principle of division, one definite indication of

treatment, one suggestion of scope and limits." (Genung, Practical Rhetoric, pp. 249, 250.) In a sermon, then, the theme is the subject viewed from one standpoint; and as the principle of unity admits but one theme, so it admits but one standpoint from which the subject is to be viewed and expounded. Hence, to take two or more standpoints is to make two or more sermons. For example, if, at the approach of Corpus Christi or the Forty Hours' Devotion, we preach to our people on the most holy Eucharist, this — the Eucharist — will be our subject. But are we to speak of it in all its extent? Assuredly no; this would be impossible in one sermon. We must, therefore, take some particular view of it — treat it from some definite standpoint — so as to produce a deep, clear-cut impression on the minds and hearts of our hearers. This particular view of our subject will be our theme.

1. The Proposition is simply the theme expressed in clear, concise, and popular form. It tells the particular view we intend to take of the subject; and, as a sermon is essentially practical in its aim or purpose, the proposition suggests or implies the distinct spiritual good we endeavor to produce in the audience. Thus, if our theme be: An unworthy Communion, the proposition will be somewhat as follows: "To receive Holy Communion unvested with the wedding garment of innocence and grace, is of all crimes the most awful and soul-dooming. To this crime I now call your

attention; and I will endeavor with the help of God's light and grace, to represent to you, if faintly, at least correctly, this terrible sin of an unworthy Communion (division), as a compound of treachery and sacrilege beyond those in every other crime." (Wiseman.)

Much of the success of a sermon depends on the clear, crisp statement of the proposition. This should stimulate the interest of the hearers, and at the same time guide the preacher and save him from unnecessary digressions. Above all, it should keep him from mixing together different aspects of his subject in the same sermon. For instance, if he propose to speak of Forgiveness of Injuries, he should not dwell on Almsgiving or Fraternal Correction, although all three are duties arising from the commandment of charity.

The proposition and definite object should be related to each other as cause to effect or antecedent to consequent. For example, in a sermon on the Death of the Sinner, the proposition may be: At the hour of death, "sinners are delivered to the most frightful despair at the view of the eternal

misery which they have deserved; so that the past, the present, and the future, concur all at once to make the death of the sinner a terrible scene,—(division) the past by its bitter regrets, the present by its despair, and the future by its overwhelming punishment." (Rev. F. X. McGowan, O. S. A.) This proposition has but one obvious, logical conclusion, or definite object, namely, that we should strain every nerve—adopt every possible means—to save ourselves from death while in mortal enmity with God.

As a rule, it is not advisable to mention the definite object formally in the proposition. Let the ostensible purpose be instruction, while the more important purpose of persuasion runs in an undercurrent through the whole sermon, coming, however, occasionally to the surface in appropriate appeals to the feelings and the will.

From what I have said, the characteristics of a well-framed proposition may be easily inferred. a) It should be *one;* that is, it should not be made up of two or more independent or loosely connected statements. The reason is that, being the ex-

pression of the theme, it should announce the development of the subject from one point of view only. Of course, as I shall show hereafter, this unity does not exclude a variety of constituent elements on which the division of a sermon is frequently based. b) The proposition should be *definite;* the terms used in it should not be vague or ambiguous; and the truth or duty it announces for development should not be wider or more comprehensive than the actual exposition which follows. c) It should be *weighty* with suggestive, stimulating thought *(gravis). Gravem autem dico propositionem,* writes Kleutgen, *quae et oratoris diligentiam et audientium attentionem meretur, excitat, et juvat. . . . . Neque vero ideo quaerenda est sententia valde acuta vel paradoxa; sed talis, ex qua totum possit orationis corpus aliquid novitatis, multum venustatis, plurimum utilitatis et contentionis accipere.* d) The matter of the proposition should be *adapted* to the preacher, to the audience, and to the time, place and other circumstances in which the sermon is delivered. This characteristic may at first sight seem so obvious that it does not need to be mentioned; yet we have

it on good authority that *mal a propos* sermons are sometimes preached from the American pulpit.

Illustration. "I once listened to a visiting clergyman condemning in vehement language, low-necked dresses where their use was utterly unknown, and where the censure had as little application as it would have had among the inhabitants of the arctic regions. I heard of a young minister of the Gospel who delivered a homily on the ravages of intemperance before an audience composed exclusively of pious, unmarried ladies who hardly knew the taste of wine, and still less that of stronger drink. I heard of another who preached on the duties of married life before a community of nuns and aged inmates." (Cardinal Gibbons, in "The Ambassador of Christ.")

2. Division. Some preachers seem to think that every sermon should have two or three "points" at least. Hence they either divide their subject-matter factitiously or they crowd so much of it into each division and the connexion between part and part is so loose that they really preach two or three sermons instead of one. They

forget that unity is an essential requirement of every sermon, and that it is much better to bring one truth home to the heart, than a hundred to the intellect, of their audience.

There are some themes, no doubt, to which full justice cannot be done without division; and it cannot be denied that many of the masterpieces of pulpit eloquence that have come down to us have their parts, or points, formally noted: yet, of the two forms of sermon, the divided and the undivided, the latter approaches more closely the ideal of preaching. It does not dissipate the attention of the audience by diversity of matter; it does not overtax the memory; its persistent adherence to one point has in it a momentum that acts on the will as no multiplicity of considerations could act.

And there will be no want of variety in such a sermon, if we expound the proposition by definition, illustration, and historical development, and enforce the practical lesson contained in it by appropriate motives. It is quite true that more profound study of the theme is required for an undivided than for a divided sermon; but

the extra labor will be richly rewarded, not by the greater benefit of the audience only, but by the mental and spiritual culture effected in the preacher himself.

Division, however, is necessary in many sermons; hence, some notion of its nature and qualities must be given here.

A proposition may be analyzed and it may be divided. It is analyzed when we take apart and explain the elements that constitute it. This analysis is the main office of definition. It is divided when we enumerate the particular propositions which it comprises. For example, in the proposition, scandal is spiritual murder, analysis takes each of the three words, scandal, murder, and spiritual, and explains its meaning. Division, on the other hand, confines itself to the subject *scandal*, and enumerates its different kinds—scandal in word, in act, or in omission, diabolical scandal, simply direct scandal *(simpliciter tale)*, scandal of the weak, pharisaical scandal. With each of these forms, except the last, it connects the predicate spiritual murder, thus breaking up the general proposition into the particular propositions contained in it.

The logical division here described is not often used to supply "the points" of a sermon. Some propositions, indeed, do not admit of this division, as their subjects are singular terms; while others, if so divided, would supply insufficient material for exposition and at the same time exclude much practical instruction. Moreover, definition in its widest sense includes logical division; for we cannot be said to have full knowledge of what is defined unless we know its extension, that is, the particular objects, facts, or truths which it comprises. For this reason preachers very often give under the head of definition not only the essential elements of the thing explained, but also its different kinds or classes. Their division into parts or points they make on another principle.

What, then, is the principle on which the proposition of a sermon ought to be divided? Manifestly, the attainment of the definite object. We speak to our people with a distinct practical end in view; therefore, every thing we say must conduce to this end; and not only what we say, but the order in which we say it. The requirements

of logic or of literary taste, however binding in other forms of composition, must, if necessary, give way in a sermon to the order most helpful to inspire the will to action through enlightenment of the understanding and appeal to the feelings.

The character of the audience we address has much to do with the division of a sermon. Fine reasoning has but slight influence on the uneducated, and subtle distinctions absolutely bewilder them. Hence, a member of a division that could not be satisfactorily expounded without recourse to such reasoning and distinctions ought to be excluded from an ordinary Sunday sermon. Take for example the following arrangement of matter in a sermon on the Greatness of Mary: "Let us follow all the degrees of the humiliation of Mary. I can perceive three of them in particular — first the almost impenetrable obscurity which concealed all her titles to glory during the course of her mortal life; secondly, the profound abjection into which she was plunged by the ignominies of her Son; and thirdly — what affected her heart more deeply — the apparent coldness which

she experienced, even to the end, from this only and beloved Son." The reasoning by which these degrees of humiliation are made to show the greatness of the Mother of God is altogether too subtle for the popular mind.

To find the most useful division of our proposition, we ought to bring ourselves in imagination to a level with our audience, enter into their thoughts, determine the limits of their knowledge of our theme, examine the prejudices, passions, errors, difficulties, we shall have to overcome, and the most practical means of overcoming them. Many sermons, ably and laboriously prepared, bear scant fruit, because the preacher takes no account of the special character and requirements of him he has to address. When these are well weighed and kept in mind, it is easy to determine what should be put first, what in the second and the third place, to attain our object. The intellectual comes before the emotional; the theoretic before the practical; the Written Word before its interpretation; the authority of the Church, before the evidence of intellect or sense; the motive of repulsion, before the motive of attraction.

In most doctrinal sermons, the terms used in enunciating the doctrine may be used as the members of division. Thus, for example, a sermon on the words of the Creed, "I believe in God," is naturally divided into two parts, the first explaining the nature of faith, and the second what we know about God. In treating of the Sacraments, however, the divisions of theology are simple and obvious, and ought to be preferred to all others. If our theme be some event, such as Death, Judgment, the Incarnation, etc., we may arrange our matter under the heads of cause, consequences, lesson; or we may take some prominent circumstances connected with the event — certainty and uncertainty; with preparation, without preparation; before, during, after.

For moral sermons, the time-honored division of the theme into 1) what is to be done, 2) how it is to be done, and 3) why it is to be done, is made on broad lines and can scarcely be excelled. In preaching on Prayer, for example, we explain, first, the nature of the duty, secondly, its practice, or how to pray, and, thirdly, the motives

that should induce us to pray. Sometimes the nature of the virtue, vice, or duty about which we speak may require no explanation, in which case the first part of our sermon should be made to consist of the doctrinal foundation of the moral obligation. Indeed, in speaking of the nature of any virtue, we should insist strongly on this doctrinal foundation. Likeness to God or, as St. Paul puts it, conformity to the image of His Son, is for every one a necessary condition of salvation. This likeness or conformity is established by sanctifying grace and the virtues and gifts infused with it, and it is maintained and increased by the exercise of those virtues. The meekness, humility, patience, charity of our divine Lord should be alluded to frequently as the ideal, the exemplar of all true Christian living. Besides, the closest conformity that man can reach here on earth consists in the union of his will by perfect obedience with the will of God. Now the will of God is revealed to us in His law, and this is adequately fulfilled only by the practice of the theological and moral virtues.

NOTE. The relation of the virtues, theological and moral, to the economy of Redemption is treated ex-

haustively by St. Thomas in 1. q. 93, o., 1. 2. qq. 61, 62, and in the Summa c. Gent., lib. 3, cap. 17, 18, 19.

In treating of the moral virtues, it is of vital importance to point out that, unless supernaturalized, they do not merit any eternal reward. They differ specifically from the moral virtues infused with sanctifying grace, although the external actions in which both terminate are substantially the same.

The attention of the audience should be directed as little as possible to the members into which a sermon is divided. In fact, the ideal of division is so to conceal it under the clear, progressive flow of thought that it will not be recognized as such by the audience. Make them look intently at the truth or duty you are explaining; make it appear more and more luminous in each succeeding stage of development; make them apply it to themselves by an earnest, practical resolution: and they will be so absorbed in this vital work, that they will pay no more direct attention to the different points of your sermon, than they do to the sun when it shows them a beautiful landscape. It follows from this, that the division of a sermon ought not be an-

nounced formally in connexion with the proposition. Yet an informal and covert intimation of it arouses interest and expectation, and, therefore, should not be omitted.

NOTE. I feel all the responsibility of throwing overboard the venerable custom of announcing formally each point of a sermon; still I do so deliberately and without any qualm of regret. The traditional "first," "secondly," "thirdly," — perhaps also, "fourthly," "fifthly," — served no good purpose; they interrupted the continuity of the discourse; they prejudiced the young against sermons; and they held out a strong temptation to the audience to relax their attention and interest at each formally announced division.

The qualities of a good division may be easily inferred from its nature and purpose. 1. It should be *brief*, that is, made up of few members. 2. It should be *simple*. A metaphysical or paradoxical division overtaxes the thinking power of an audience. Bourdaloue divided his celebrated sermon on Faith into two parts — Faith saves; Faith condemns; but this division, however sanctioned by the usage of his day or by the character of his audience, would not be suitable to an ordinary American congregation. 3. It should be *adequate*, or exhaustive, covering the proposition precisely

and including everything necessary for its full and satisfactory development. If a sermon on Hell were to be divided from the twofold pain suffered — the pain of loss and the pain of sense — the division would be inadequate, because the important element of unending duration would be omitted. This quality, however, is not necessary when the division is taken from circumstances connected with the theme. Thus, in a sermon on the Love of God, if the division be taken from the motives that urge men to it, there is no necessity to give all those motives that might be adduced; — the strongest and most telling are sufficient. 4. Lastly, the division ought to be *adapted* to the attainment of the definite object. This quality has been sufficiently explained already.

Examples of Proposition and Division.

1. On the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin. "This festival of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin recalls to us the illustrious virtues with which she was endowed, and the sublime privileges with which she was invested. We will simply go through a few passages of her life, and consider her in her

various relations with her Son; and see how we can trace those memorable events that distinguished her in the world, that have raised her to a place beside the throne of that Son in heaven, to her simple but glorious title of 'Mother of Jesus'." (Wiseman.)

2. The Eucharist. "What do we find in ancient Jerusalem? The prefiguring and foreshadowing of Christ. What shall we find in the Heavenly Jerusalem? The possession of Christ without types or shadows. What ought we then to find in the Church? Both foreshadowing and possession. Foreshadowing, because we are not yet capable of, or prepared for, the vision of Christ; possession, because Christ has already come to satisfy the desire of mankind. Therefore we need the Eucharist; that is, something which does not give us the shadow without possession, nor possession without the shadow. See, brethren, how naturally and aptly the Eucharist places itself in the history of humanity, for the development of the designs of Providence with regard to religion, and such is the sweet argument of which it is my privilege to-day to speak." (P. Agostino da Montefeltro.)

3. Temperance. "Now, if you wish to know the glorious object for which you are associated in this grand temperance movement; if you wish to know the magnificent purpose which you should have in view, all you have to do is to reflect with me upon the consequence and the nature of intemperance, against which you have declared war. Let me depict to you, as well as I can, what intemperance is — what drunkenness is; and then I shall have laid a solid foundation to the appeal which I make to you, not only personally to persevere in this glorious cause of temperance, but to try, every man of you, like an evangelist of this holy Gospel, to gather as many as you can of your friends and associates, and of those whom your influence reaches, to become members of this most salutary and honorable body. No man can value a virtue until he knows the deep degradation of the opposite vice." (Father Burke.)

CHAPTER X.

Narration and Description.

The body of a sermon is mostly occupied with the exposition of revealed truth. This exposition should be clear, interesting, and persuasive; and to make it such, frequent examples, comparisons and other illustrations are absolutely necessary. They are necessary to relieve the mind from the strain of continued serious thought, and to stimulate the attention; but, above all, they are necessary to throw light on the truth expounded and to impress it on the mind. Hence, exposition requires much help from narration and description; and therefore, I think it advisable to make a few general remarks in the present chapter on these two forms of discourse.

Narration deals with facts or occurrences which it recounts; description with objects, character and mental states which it portrays. History and biography belong

mostly to narration, while books of travel abound in description.

1. Narration may be a simple statement of some transaction or it may be a statement of a series of occurrences culminating in one of special interest, called the *denouement.* The transactions or occurrences which form the subject-matter of narration may be either real or imagined. The facts of our divine Lord's life as well as all others sufficiently authenticated are real; parables, allegories, and fables are imagined. Both have their place and use in a sermon.

As narration is subsidiary to exposition and persuasion, it must of necessity be short. It must also be clear and simple,—it must impose no strain on the attention of the audience, but rather be an interval of rest for the recovery of mental energy previously expended. Again, it must be apposite; that is, it must have a manifest purpose of elucidation or enforcement; and it must be capable of promoting it. An example, no matter how well told, that has only a forced or remote application can have no motive but the miserable vanity of the preacher; it does not forward the end

of the sermon; and although it may give pleasure to some, in those whose judgment is worth anything it is calculated to produce only contempt.

In narrating a transaction or series of occurrences, the order of time ought to be generally followed. If the facts be real, they should be narrated faithfully, and no imaginary circumstances should be introduced to heighten the effect.

NOTE. A preacher familiar with the topography of Palestine as well as the manners and character of its people may often add much beauty to a Scripture narrative by describing the scene of the occurrence. By this means, the events mentioned in the Gospels may be made singularly vivid and interesting. Even local or personal features based on probable conjecture may be introduced into the picture, provided we make clear their conjectural character to our hearers. Observe, for instance, how delicately yet definitely Cardinal Newman gives the tradition of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady with an intimation of the credence to be given to it. "She, the lily of Eden, who had always dwelt out of the sight of man, fittingly did she die in the garden's shade, and amid the sweet flowers in which she had lived. Her departure made no noise in the world. The Church went about her common duties, preaching, converting, suffering; there were persecutions, there was fleeing from place to place, there were martyrs, there were triumphs; at length the rumor spread abroad that the Mother of God was no longer upon earth. Pilgrims went to and fro; they

sought for her relics, but they found them not; did she die at Ephesus? or did she die at Jerusalem? reports varied; but her tomb could not be pointed out, or if it was found, it was open; and instead of her pure and fragrant body, there was a growth of lilies from the earth she had touched. So inquirers went home marveling, and waiting for further light. And then it was said, how that when her dissolution was at hand, and her soul was to pass in triumph before the judgment-seat of her Son, the apostles were suddenly gathered together in the place, even in the Holy City, to bear part in the joyful ceremonial; how that they buried her with fitting rites; how that the third day, when they came to the tomb, they found it empty, and angelic choirs with their glad voices were heard singing day and night the glories of their risen Queen. But, however we feel towards the details of this history (nor is there anything in it which will be unwelcome or difficult to piety), so much cannot be doubted, from the consent of the whole Catholic world and the revelations made to holy souls, that, as is befitting, she is, soul and body, with her Son and God in Heaven, and that we are enabled to celebrate, not only her death, but her Assumption."

(On the Fitness of the Glories of Mary.)

Narration is used by preachers almost exclusively for the purpose of illustration; but it is equally well adapted and should be as freely used to arouse the feelings on behalf of the definite object. "*Suavis narratio est,*" writes Cicero, "*quae habet admirationes, expectationes, exitus inopinatos,*

motus animorum, *colloquia personarum*, *dolores*, *iracundias*, *motus*, *laetitias*, *cupiditates*." It may not be always easy to find facts the narration of which will produce those emotions; and even when we have found them, much taste and skill are required in our style and delivery to bring out their full effect. It is probably on account of such difficulties that preachers rarely use narration in the conclusion of their sermons. Yet the every-day life of a parish as well as the daily newspaper supplies numerous pathetic and other emotional incidents well calculated to touch and arouse feeling; and a priest of earnest purpose will not find much trouble in collecting those incidents for future use in the pulpit. The style and delivery used in presenting them must be acquired by practice.

2. Description. This is the accurate portrayal of persons or things. It not only adds much beauty to a sermon, but it is most useful in engaging the attention of an audience and inspiring interest in the exposition of truth. It bears much the same relation to a sermon that the "*compositio loci*" of St. Ignatius bears to a meditation.

Description has for its subject-matter everything that can be portrayed in words, —persons, places and objects, as well as mental states, such as sorrow, remorse, pity, desire, etc. It is generally found in combination with other forms of discourse, particularly with narration. It is difficult, indeed, to narrate an occurrence with any satisfaction to the hearer unless we describe the actors in it and give some idea of the place where it happened.

A description of the surrounding scenery, when it can be given, is generally an appropriate and agreeable setting for an exposition of our Saviour's words and actions. It need not be minute, but the details given should be vivid and striking.

The chief use, however, of Description in sermons is to depict mental states. The unrest, the remorse, the agony of a believing soul enmeshed in a habit of sin, if well described, will exercise a powerful influence on an audience, because each one's experience will recognize the truth of the description. Yet there are few processes of composition more difficult than this portrayal of the interior working and state of the

soul. Many of us have not acquired the habit of introspection that is absolutely necessary for the undertaking; and, moreover, we have but few words in our language to express with exactness purely mental acts and states. Hence direct description of the interior movements of the soul should be rarely attempted; it is much easier and better to give the outward manifestations and effects of those movements.

The descriptions introduced into a sermon ought to be *brief*. As, in general, they are ancillary to exposition, they should not be allowed to push it into the background or absorb an undue share of interest and importance. Some preachers who have a special talent for description devote altogether too much space to word-painting. They, no doubt, produce a pleasing impression on an audience; but it is questionable if their sermons are productive of salutary results. They seem to make numerous admirers for themselves, but few converts to the higher life.

To acquire facility and skill in the art of description, writers distinguished as word-painters should be read slowly and thought-

fully, and their most striking passages or sketches should be analyzed, copied, and reproduced in our own words, with the purpose of mastering the secret of their success.

In modern prose literature Carlyle, De Quincey, and Ruskin stand preeminent as word-painters; but for artistic delineation of mental states De Quincey is unsurpassed by any other modern writer. We need not, however, go outside the Church for a model of exquisite descriptive writing. Many of Father Faber's Spiritual Works abound in beautiful word-pictures, not only of persons and material objects, but also of every emotional state of the mind. His work entitled "The Foot of the Cross" will be found particularly useful to young preachers in this respect.

The description of sacred persons of whom we may have occasion to speak in the course of a sermon, should consist of characteristics grounded on Sacred Scripture or authentic history. Mere possibility or even likelihood does not justify us in defining and individualizing persons left undefined — perhaps purposely — in the inspired writings.

As to the vividness of coloring used in description, a delicate problem arises. "Refined" taste abhors flaring colors in literature as well as in dress and in painting. The horrors of an impenitent death, of a soul condemned at Judgment, of the eternal fire of Hell are acutely painful to it. On the other hand, the general run of people are grimly attracted by descriptions of such things and are benefited by them. Is a priest, then, guilty of an offense against what is called refined taste when he gives a harrowing picture of some object connected with his sermon? I know some who think so; — persons who sneer at those lurid, but truthful descriptions of the consequences of sin, given in missions and retreats. There are priests, too, who are influenced by such sneers and who preach unemotional, colorless sermons because they wish to please one or two would-be high-toned families in their congregation. Such conduct is not only unworthy but criminal in a minister of the Gospel. Yet I do not deny that mistaken zeal sometimes leads preachers into the opposite extreme of grossly exaggerated descriptions of death,

and judgment and hell, of the fewness of the elect and the irredeemable damnation of the world. I cannot help suspecting that it is not all zeal that inspires those men to extend without warrant the simple words of Sacred Scripture. But whatever be their motive, they are quite as guilty, consciously or unconsciously, of perverting revealed truth as those who attempt to minimize its terrors. Apostolic men fell into neither extreme. They exaggerated nothing; they kept within the ordinary, traditional teaching of the Church; they tried not to heighten the effect of their descriptions by recounting pious beliefs, apposite miracles, or private revelations without strict investigation of their truth. Still those men preached with an earnestness and a vehemence and an impassioned fervor which we may strive to emulate but can never expect to surpass.

EXAMPLES.

"It was at the beginning of the present century that this devotion of the Month of Mary sprang up in the Catholic Church; and the circumstances of its origin are most wonderful. Some seventy years ago, or thereabouts, a little child — a poor little child — scarcely

come to the use of reason, on a beautiful evening in May, knelt down, and began to lisp with childish voice the Litany of the Blessed Virgin before the image of the Child in the arms of the Madonna, in one of the streets of Rome. One little child in Rome, moved by an impulse that we cannot account for — apparently a childish freak — knelt down in the public streets and began saying the Litany that he had heard sung in the church. The next evening he was there again at the same hour, and began singing his little litany again. Another little child, a boy, on his passage stopped, and began singing the responses. The next evening three or four other children came, apparently for amusement, and knelt before the same image of the Blessed Virgin, and sang their litany. After a time — after a few evenings — some pious women, the mothers of the children, delighted to see the early piety of their sons and daughters, came along with them, and knelt down, and blended their voices in the litany; and the priest of a neighboring church said: 'Come into the church, and I will light a few candles on the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and we will all sing the litany together.' And so they went into the church; they lighted up the candles, and knelt, and there they sang the litany. He spoke a few words to them about the Blessed Virgin, about her patience, about her love for her divine Son, and about the dutiful veneration in which she was held by her Son. From that hour the devotion of the month of May spread throughout the whole Catholic world; until within a few years, wherever there was a Catholic church, a Catholic altar, a Catholic priest, or a Catholic to hear and respond to the litany, the month of May became the month of Mary, the month of devotion to the Blessed Virgin."

Father Burke.

"The poor infant passes through his two, or three, or five years of innocence, blessed in that he cannot yet sin; but at length (oh woeful day!) he begins to realize the distinction between right and wrong. Alas, sooner or later, for the age varies, but sooner or later the awful day has come; he has the power, the great, the dreadful, the awful power of discerning and pronouncing a thing to be wrong, and yet doing it. He has a distinct view that he shall grievously offend his Maker and Judge by doing this or that; and while he is really able to keep from it, he is at liberty to choose it, and to commit it. He has the dreadful power of committing a mortal sin. Young as he is, he has as true an apprehension of that sin, and can give as real a consent, as did the evil spirit, when he fell. The day is come, and who shall say whether it will have closed, whether it will have run out many hours, before he will have exercised that power, and have perpetrated, in fact, what he ought not to do, what he need not do, what he can do? . . . . . Poor child! he looks the same to his parents. They do not know what has been going on in him; or perhaps, did they know it, they would think very little of it, for they are in a state of mortal sin as well as he. They, too, long before they knew each other, had sinned, and mortally too, and were never reconciled to God; thus they lived for years, unmindful of their state. At length they married; it was a day of joy to them, but not to the angels; they might be in high life or in low estate, they might be prosperous or not in their temporal course, but their union was not blessed by God. They gave birth to a child; he was not condemned to hell on his birth, but he had the omens of evil upon him, it seemed that he would go the way of all flesh: and now the time has come; the presage is justified; and he willingly departs from

God. At length the forbidden fruit has been eaten; sin has been devoured with a pleased appetite; the gates of hell have yawned upon him, silently and without his knowing it; he has no eyes to see its flames, but its inhabitants are gazing upon him; his place in it is fixed beyond dispute; — unless his Maker interfere in some extraordinary way, he is doomed."

Cardinal Newman.

"The mothers at once understood Jesus Christ; their heart deceived them not; and high and transcendent as were His words, though the end to be attained seemed something away from the earth, though henceforth the crown of maternal dignity must be something holy and austere, yet when the mothers heard that sublime and tender voice saying, 'Suffer the little children to come to Me, theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' they ran to Him.

"And from that day, after that word, how delightful it is to see in the Gospel how our Lord scarcely again walked on the earth without being surrounded by children and their mothers.

"With that infallible instinct whereby the heart knows where love exists, these poor mothers came to Jesus Christ in full confidence, and brought their children to Him; carrying some on their arms and in their bosom, holding others by the hand, they besought Him graciously to touch them, to bless them, to lay His hands on them, and to pray for them: '*Oblati sunt ei parvuli, ut manus eis imponeret, et oraret. . . . . Afferebant ad illum parvulos et infantes.*'

"Our Lord, then, suffered Himself to be surrounded by all these little children, and Himself coming close to them, He looked on them with ineffable love, He sweetly caressed them, with His divine lips He touched

their pure foreheads, He placed His hands on their innocent heads, and prayed over them, as their mothers had besought Him: '*Et complexans eos, orabat super illos.*' . . . . .

"They are so weak, so young; the journey will be so long and so dangerous, they will meet with so many snares and deceits! Ah! yes, I can understand that their mothers would beseech the Saviour to pray for them; I feel that this divine Saviour would gather in His heart the tenderest and most powerful prayers, and that He would say them over these dear and gentle children, to preserve them from evil, to guard their innocence, to place them as it were under the shelter of His love, at least in these early and pure joys of the morning of their life.

"But what is no less charming to see in the Gospels, is that not only the mothers, but that the children also felt themselves drawn to our Lord, they understood the confidence of their mothers, and they showed themselves yet more trusting still. . . . . .

"There are two examples of this love of the children for our Lord, which touch me specially, and which will show how great this love was: thus following Him even to the heart of a wilderness, we see them forgetting all the needs of life, and that for three days. When our Lord miraculously multiplied the loaves to feed the fainting crowd in the midst of the sands of the desert, we find that in this crowd were many children; the Gospel, enumerating those who had been miraculously fed, adds, '*besides the children.*'

"Later, when our Lord, some days before His Passion, made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the children were there again in the crowd, in the front: these sweet children, who perhaps had been more than once blessed by Him, were there, joyful and delighted;

they climbed the trees, they cut the branches and covered the road with them, they ran on before, they came and went, they announced His coming from afar, they mixed their cries with the acclamations of the people; their faces were radiant, and with the excitement and simplicity of their age, they came into the temple, and their cries echoed even in the holy place: 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' And our Lord was pleased with their homage, and with the genuine shouting of the innocent voices; and when the Pharisees would have had them silenced, He justified them: 'Is it not written,' said He to these hypocrites, 'that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise?'" Dupanloup.

"Among the objects which nature presents to us, there is nothing, perhaps, more beautiful than the morning star. The shades of night are thick upon the earth; the black clouds cover the firmament; the storm, it may be, has passed in all its fury, and swept over the world at the dark midnight hour; and men, awaked from their slumbers, have been terrified. The sailor on the vasty deep has almost despaired of that life which he has trusted to the treacherous element on which he lives. But, when the morning hour approaches, a faint light is seen over the eastern horizon; it brightens, crowning the Orient hills with a golden splendor. Out of that light — the promise of the coming day, there rises a pale, silvery, beautiful star; trembling, as if afraid to encroach upon the domain of night, it rises in its solitary beauty over the eastern hills; it tells of the coming day; it is the herald and messenger of the sun, that lies as yet hidden under the eastern waves, and under the deep shadows of the hills. The moment the sailor, in his storm-tossed bark, sees that star, he hails it as the sure

harbinger of the coming day. The moment the lonely traveller, out on the desolate moorland, perceives it, he knows that presently his bewildered way will be brightened by the rising sun. The very hills seem to bow in reverence toward the messenger of the coming day. And the star, meantime, rises slowly above the horizon, as resplendent as the moon, because of the thickness of darkness around. Gradually, the aureola of the dawn of day spreads its light across the heavens; until, at length, comes the splendor of the rising sun. Then the morning star gradually loses itself in the greater and brighter light. It is a beautiful thing to behold — the very ideal of modesty, in its solitary, trembling ascent towards heaven. . . . . Can anything be imagined more beautiful than this? The world, as it were, prepared for its splendor, by the darkness of the night; its beaming, full of hope, announcing the certainty of the coming day, another bright day of sunshine, to gladden the hearts of men. It has the splendor of the reflected light of the sun which is to follow in its wake, and to rise upon that very point of the eastern horizon where the morning star rose before. The flowers, drooping during the night, open slowly their leaves, turning their petals towards the East. The lark, shaking the dew off his wing, rises out of the corn-field with a song of gladness, as if ambitious to catch sight of the rising sun before his beams can shine on earth. The herds in the fields rise from their nightly rest to greet the coming day. Can anything be imagined more beautiful in nature than the beauty of hope — the beauty of its brightness — the beauty of its silvery light, than the beauty of the message it brings to this darkened earth? No; nothing can be imagined more beautiful in nature than the morning star, as it rises over the eastern hills." Father Burke.

"There, then, in that most awful hour, knelt the Saviour of the world, putting off the defences of His divinity, dismissing His reluctant angels, who in myriads were ready at His call, and opening His arms, baring His breast, sinless as He was, to the assaults of His foe, — of a foe whose breath was a pestilence, and whose embrace was an agony. There he knelt, motionless and still, while the vile and horrible fiend clad His spirit in a robe steeped in all that is hateful and heinous in human crime, which clung close round His heart, and filled His conscience, and found its way into every sense and pore of His mind, and spread over Him a moral leprosy, till He almost felt Himself that which He never could be, and which His foe would fain have made him. Oh, the horror, when He looked, and did not know Himself, and felt as a foul and loathsome sinner, from His vivid perception of that mass of corruption which poured over His head and ran down even to the skirts of His garments! Oh, the distraction, when He found His eyes, and hands, and feet, and lips, and heart, as if the members of the Evil One, and not of God! Are these the hands of the Immaculate Lamb of God, once innocent, but now red with ten thousand barbarous deeds of blood? are these His lips, not uttering prayer, and praise, and holy blessings, but as if defiled with oaths, and blasphemies, and doctrines of devils? or His eyes, profaned as they are by all the evil visions and idolatrous fascinations for which men have abandoned their adorable Creator? And His ears, they ring with sounds of revelry and strife; and His heart is frozen with avarice, and cruelty, and unbelief; and His very memory is laden with every sin which has been committed since the fall, in all regions of the earth, with the pride of the old giants, and the lusts of the five cities, and the obduracy of Egypt, and the am-

bition of Babel, and the unthankfulness and scorn of Israel. Oh, who does not know the misery of a haunting thought which comes again and again, in spite of rejection, to annoy, if it cannot seduce? or of some odious and sickening imagination, in no sense one's own, but forced upon the mind from without? or of evil knowledge, gained with or without a man's fault, but which he would give a great price to be rid of once and for ever? And adversaries such as these gather around Thee, Blessed Lord, in millions now; they come in troops more numerous than the locust or the palmer-worm, or the plagues of hail, and flies, and frogs, which were sent against Pharaoh. Of the living and of the dead and of the as yet unborn, of the lost and of the saved, of Thy people and of strangers, of sinners and of saints, all sins are there. Thy dearest are there, Thy saints and Thy chosen are upon Thee; . . . . . but not as comforters, but as accusers, like the friends of Job, 'sprinkling dust towards heaven,' and heaping curses on Thy head. . . . . Hopes blighted, vows broken, lights quenched, warnings scorned, opportunities lost; the innocent betrayed, the young hardened, the penitent relapsing, the just overcome, the aged failing; the sophistry of misbelief, the wilfulness of passion, the obduracy of pride, the tyranny of habit, the canker of remorse, the wasting fever of care, the anguish of shame, the pining of disappointment, the sickness of despair; such cruel, such pitiable spectacles, such heart-rending, revolting, detestable, maddening scenes; nay, the haggard faces, the convulsed lips, the flushed cheek, the dark brow of the willing slaves of evil, they are all before Him now; they are upon Him and in Him." Cardinal Newman.

"St. John and St. Peter — the one the symbol of the contemplative, the other of the practical life — are undoubtedly the grandest and most attractive figures in that Apostolic band. The character of St. John has been often mistaken. Filled as he was with a most divine tenderness — realizing as he did to a greater extent than any (other) of the Apostles the full depth and significance of our Lord's new commandment — rich as his Epistles and his Gospel are with a meditative and absorbing reverence — dear as he has ever been in consequence to the heart of the mystic and the saint — yet he was something indefinitely far removed from that effeminate pietist which has furnished the usual type under which he has been represented. The name Boanerges, or 'Sons of Thunder,' which he has shared with his brother James, their joint petition for precedence in the kingdom of God, their passionate request to call down fire from heaven on the offending village of the Samaritans, the burning energy of the *patois* in which the Apocalypse is written, the impetuous horror with which, according to tradition, St. John recoiled from the presence of the heretic Cerinthus, all show that in him was the spirit of the eagle, which, rather than the dove, has been his immemorial symbol. And since zeal and enthusiasm, dead as they are, and scorned in these days by an effete and comfortable religionism, yet have ever been indispensable instruments in spreading the Kingdom of Heaven, doubtless it was the existence of these elements in his character, side by side with tenderness and devotion, which endeared him so greatly to his Master, and made him the 'disciple whom Jesus loved.' The wonderful depth and power of his imagination, the rare combination of contemplativeness and passion, of strength and sweetness, in the same soul — the perfect faith which in-

spired his devotion, and the perfect love which precluded fear — these were the gifts and graces which rendered him worthy of leaning his young head on the bosom of his Lord.

"Nor is his friend St. Peter a less interesting study. We shall have many opportunities of observing the generous, impetuous, wavering, noble impulses of his thoroughly human but most lovable disposition. Let the brief but vivid summary of another now suffice. 'It would be hard to tell,' says Dr. Hamilton, 'whether most of his fervor flowed through the outlet of adoration or activity. His full heart put force and promptitude into every movement. Is his Master encompassed by fierce ruffians? — Peter's ardor flashes in his ready sword, and converts the Galilean boatman into the soldier instantaneous. Is there a rumor of a resurrection from Joseph's tomb? — John's nimbler foot distances his older friend; but Peter's eagerness outruns the serene love of John, and past the gazing disciple he rushes into the vacant sepulchre. Is the risen Saviour on the strand? — his comrades secure the net, and turn the vessel's head for shore; but Peter plunges over the vessel's side, and struggling through the waves, in his dripping coat falls down at his Master's feet. Does Jesus say, "Bring of the fish ye have caught?" — ere anyone could anticipate the word, Peter's brawny arm is lugging the weltering net with its glittering spoil ashore, and every eager movement unwittingly is answering beforehand the question of his Lord, "Simon, lovest thou me?" And that fervor is the best, which, like Peter's, and as occasion requires, can ascend in ecstatic ascriptions of adoration and praise, or follow Christ to prison and to death; which can concentrate itself on feats of heroic devotion, or distribute itself in the affectionate assiduities of a miscellaneous industry.'"

Dean Farrar.

CHAPTER XI.

Exposition in General.

Exposition, argumentation, and persuasion give their names to three so-called "forms" of literary composition. Exposition removes ignorance or doubt regarding some truth; argumentation convinces an adversary of his error; while persuasion leads the will to action in some definite direction.

Argumentation has no place in a normal sermon intended for a Catholic audience. There may be error as to one or other revealed truth; but it must be removed by exposition, that is, by a clear, authoritative statement of the teaching of the Church regarding it.

Exposition enlightens the understanding; persuasion moves the will. This broad, well defined distinction, however correct in itself, has led many preachers into serious errors and given rise to a very prevalent

defect in sacred oratory. It is true that revealed doctrine must be expounded to the understanding, and also impressed on the will as a vital principle of action. It is true, then, as a consequence, that exposition and persuasion are essential elements of a sermon. But it is not true that one part of it should be devoted *exclusively* to exposition and another to persuasion. The two chief faculties of the soul, the understanding and the will, always work simultaneously, so that neither is ever wholly quiescent in any mental operation. Even in the most abstract reasoning there is an undercurrent of interest, gratification, or repulsion that denotes the activity of the will, though the intellect is the principal operator. Keeping this truth in mind, the preacher must adapt his exposition of doctrine to the will of his hearer as well as to his intellect. In other words, he must not only avoid everything in expression and delivery that would alienate the will, but he must so shape his teaching as to conciliate and please it. The best way of doing this is to create in the hearer that intellectual satisfaction which always comes from the

first firm grasp of an interesting idea or truth. (This satisfaction, though called intellectual, is in reality a state of the will, not of the intellect.)

The prosiness of sermons comes chiefly from preachers ignoring the exigencies of the will while the intellect is being instructed. They know that if the will be not moved to some definite action, the end of the sermon is not attained; but they seem not to know that a first and most necessary step to move the will is to conciliate and please it. Hence they write and deliver theological essays of more or less merit, but they do not *preach*.

Example. In the following extract from a sermon on the Church, the defect of addressing the intellect exclusively is manifest. The ideas contained in it are commonplace and uninteresting, and the style is dry and unemotional. Besides, part of the doctrine enunciated contains a false assumption.

". . . . I have, therefore, determined today briefly to recall to your minds the arguments which underlie our believe in the Catholic Church as the true Church of Christ. . . . . The arguments on which our

faith in the Catholic Church is based we shall find contained in the answer to the following two questions, which will form the subject and division of my discourse—

1. Did Christ establish a Church?

2. Which is the true Church established by Christ?

"1. Has Christ established a Church?

'i. Christ is, as you know, the Son of God, true God and true man, our Redeemer, or, as He Himself says: the way, the truth, and the life; the way on which we must walk; the truth which we must believe; and the life which must quicken our souls, if we would attain our supernatural end. But Christ is the Redeemer, not only of those with whom He conversed here on earth, but of *all* men of all ages. It was, therefore, His duty to provide that not only those of His own time, but all men of all times might find the way, the truth and the life, and thus be made partakers of the work of Redemption. For this end, therefore, He must have provided some reliable and efficacious means," etc., etc.

It is of vital importance, then, to the success of a sermon that our exposition of doc-

trine or duty conciliate the will, at the same time that it enlightens and satisfies the intellect. It should, therefore, be *persuasive.* As its aim is essentially practical — some definite spiritual good of the hearer — all abstract thought must be excluded from it that is not directed to, and does not culminate in, some salutary act of the will. In this respect the exposition of a sermon differs fundamentally from the exposition of treatises and essays and even of discourses.

Exposition may be engaged either with terms or with truths. Often, indeed, the meaning of a truth is best given by defining and explaining the terms in which it is enunciated; but, unlike terms, truths have not to be merely defined—they have also to be illustrated and enforced. Terms, or words, are sometimes so clear and elementary, that to define them would be to trifle with the patience of the audience. In such case, of course, they are not to be defined; yet, as I have said in a previous chapter, it is not safe to credit an audience with much accurate knowledge even of simple words when they express abstract ideas; and in case of doubt it is better to run the risk of

being a little tedious, than to omit anything necessary for a thorough, satisfactory knowledge of the truth expounded.

Exposition includes everything that throws light on the proposition, or theme, of a sermon. Hence it should contain 1. a clear, comprehensive knowledge of the truth propounded; 2. an account of its origin and history; and 3. it should let in on it all the light that can be drawn from example, comparison, contrast, analogy, etc. Definition, history, and illustration may then be taken as the main forms of Exposition. I deliberately omit argumentation, as I speak throughout this work only of a sermon preached to a Catholic audience which is not permitted to entertain doubts on matters of faith. Argumentation implies opposition or doubt in the mind of the hearer; and it is wholly out of place where no one either doubts or resists. However, under the head of "history" I intend that the preacher should give everything that is now given in the form of proof or argument.

The definition, history and illustration of a doctrine contain everything that needs to

be said for its fullest and most exhaustive elucidation. As these forms of Exposition correspond substantially with the *loci* of Aristotle, we may feel assured that outside the teaching classified and included under them, no further popular teaching is necessary or, perhaps, even possible to a preacher. Some sacred orators, indeed, have aspired to soar above the beaten logical course determined by the greatest mind of antiquity and followed by minds but slightly less great than his. Yet, although they may have dazzled and attracted, they have notably failed to produce permanent practical results. Icarus with sail or oars might have reached Sicily in safety: relying on artificial wings, he was doomed to fail.

The *loci*, or topics, of Aristotle, summarized under the three heads definition, history and illustration, are divided into intrinsic and extrinsic. The former are given in the following words by Kleutgen: "*Ex locis intrinsecis alii in ipsa rei natura et nomine siti sunt: definitio, genus, forma, enumeratio partium, notatio et conjugatio; alii in iis, quae cum re connexa sunt: causae, effecta, ante-*

cedentia, consequentia, adjuncta; alii denique in collatione rei cum aliis: comparatio, similitudo et contraria. Further on he divides the *loci extrinseci* into those that are common to all oratory and those that are special to each kind. The former are testimony and example; the latter (for preaching), Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, Theology, Church History, and approved writers on Christian life.

NOTE. Careful study of our best and most popular pulpit orators show us that they were guided, consciously or unconsciously, in their finding and arrangement of expository matter by the Aristotelian topics. The two most eminent preachers of the present century, Pere Lacordaire and Father Burke, followed closely the scholastic method of exposition, which is itself cast in the Stagirite mold. I cannot, then, agree with Dr. Phelps in the following remarks: "The oratorical instinct, at least, claims freedom from such helps" (the topics of Aristotle). "All that criticism can do, therefore, for its assistance in the matter of invention, is to direct it to the cultivation of the thinking power. In actual composing, a writer must take what comes to him, with no such elaborate searching in prescribed channels of inquiry. I know nothing of any process of successful composition which has not in it a large infusion of the element which the world calls chance. As a Christian preacher, I willingly give to it a more sacred name. That preacher is not to be envied who knows nothing in his own experience of a secondary fulfillment of the promise: It shall be given to you in

that same hour what ye shall speak. Yet divine suggestion uses, not ignores, the laws of mind."

Besides the all-important quality of persuasiveness of which I have already spoken, Exposition should also possess the qualities of simplicity, clearness, and conciseness. These qualities need no explanation, and they will never be wanting if we observe two precautions, the first, to avoid mistifying, and the second, to avoid boring, our audience.

CHAPTER XII.

Definition.

Definition is the groundwork of exposition. Its subject-matter is words, and its object to give a clear, distinct, complete, and comprehensive knowledge of them and of what they stand for.

Words may be considered in themselves or in the things they stand for. When considered in themselves, their definition is called nominal; when considered in the things they stand for, it is called real. A nominal definition may be taken from the etymology of the word defined, or it may give the meaning ordinarily attached to it, or it may explain the special sense in which the speaker or writer uses the term. A real definition goes behind the name to the thing signified by it, of which it gives a clear, distinct, complete, and comprehensive notion.

NOTE. A clear notion of a thing enables us to distinguish it from everything else. A distinct notion contains all the essential elements that constitute the

thing. A notion is said to be complete when we can analyze its essential elements down to their simplest forms. Finally, a comprehensive notion is not only clear, distinct, and complete; but it includes also the knowledge as well of the causes and effects of the thing, as of its properties and accidents, and its relations to cognate things. Zigliara.

(Scholastic philosophy calls no notion comprehensive that does not contain the knowledge of the relations of the thing known "*ad ordinem totius universi.*" Such knowledge is beyond the reach of human intelligence.)

A nominal definition is sometimes useful as an introduction of the thing to be defined. It may also help to enforce a motive; as when we say: "You are Christians, that is, followers — disciples of Christ. You glory in the name; yet what glory is there in a name that condemns you? — a name that has nothing in your lives to justify it, but everything to discredit and contradict it?" Any further use of the nominal definition generally savors of pedantry and should be avoided.

The *real* definition, therefore, is the one with which we have mostly to do here. It is of two kinds, logical and rhetorical. A logical definition confines itself to giving

the essential, classified elements of the thing defined. A rhetorical definition goes far beyond this. It explains everything about an object that is required to have a clear, distinct, complete and comprehensive knowledge of it. It gives not only its parts and divisions, but its characteristics, its properties and qualities, its cause and effects. Furthermore, if any of these details be unfamiliar to the audience, or if time be needed to convey a deeper impression of it, the speaker or writer keeps turning it over and over by the ordinary rules of amplification, until he is satisfied that he has made it as distinct and luminous as the occasion requires. The preacher, in a word, is allowed unrestricted use of every expedient and form of composition — illustration, narration, description—to make his rhetorical definition as full and complete as possible.

Example of logical definition: Faith is a theological virtue infused by God, inclining us to assent firmly, on account of His truthfulness, to all that He has revealed and proposes to us through the Church for our belief.

Example of rhetorical definition: Faith "is assenting to a doctrine as true, which we do not see, which we cannot prove, because God says it is true, who cannot lie. And further than this, since God says it is true, not with His own voice, but by the voice of His messengers, it is assenting to what man says, not simply viewed as a man, but to what he is commissioned to declare, as a messenger, prophet, or ambassador from God. In the ordinary course of this world we account things true either because we see them, or because we can perceive that they follow and are deducible from what we do see; that is, we gain truth by sight or by reason, not by faith. You will say indeed, that we accept a number of things which we cannot prove or see, on the word of others; certainly, but then we accept what they say only as the word of man; and we have not commonly that absolute and unreserved confidence in them, which nothing can shake. We know that man is open to mistake, and we are always glad to find some confirmation of what he says, from other quarters, in any important matter; or we receive his information with

negligence and unconcern, as something of little consequence, as a matter of opinion; or, if we act upon it, it is as a matter of prudence, thinking it best and safest to do so. We take his word for what it is worth, and we use it either according to our necessity, or its probability. We keep the decision in our own hands, and reserve to ourselves the right of re-opening the question whenever we please. This is very different from Divine faith; he who believes that God is true, and that this is His word, which He has committed to man, has no doubt at all. He is as certain that the doctrine taught is true, as that God is true; and he is certain, *because* God is true, *because* God has spoken, not because he sees its truth or can prove its truth. That is, faith has two peculiarities; — it is most certain, decided, positive, immovable in its assent, and it gives this assent not because it sees with the eye, or sees with the reason, but because it receives the tidings from one who comes from God." (From Cardinal Newman's Discourse on Faith and Private Judgment.)

NOTE. From the foregoing examples two main distinctions will be easily inferred between a logical and a

rhetorical definition. In the logical definition, it is the mental *idea* of the thing, not the thing itself, that we classify and define. In the rhetorical definition, we go straight to the thing itself and explain it in its most concrete form. In the former, faith is called a virtue, in the latter, it is called an assenting; virtue being the class name of the idea, while assenting is the concrete name of the mental act itself. The second distinction is, that the logical definition gives no explanation of its terms, and is condensed, formal, and purely intellectual; while the rhetorical definition is chiefly taken up with informal, discursive and popular explanation of everything necessary to place the object before the hearer in as clear and interesting a form as possible.

Logical definition is absolutely necessary for the preacher's own guidance, but it is generally too condensed and abstract for popular use. It may, indeed, be given as the summary and conclusion of a rhetorical definition; but then all its terms should have been previously explained, so that the hearer would have no difficulty in understanding it. It may be given even at the beginning after the statement of the proposition, provided it has become familiar to the audience through the words of the catechism. In this case the people are not bewildered by strange words; and they are pleased to receive a fuller and deeper know-

ledge of formulae which they once learned, perhaps without much comprehension of their meaning. Indeed, a preacher or catechist should adhere as closely as possible to the words of the catechism in all his definitions and divisions. Making the catechism his basis, he will find ample opportunity in the development and illustration of its words for the grandest display of eloquence of which he is capable.

Notwithstanding the necessity of logical definition for the preacher's own use, most care and labor must be expended on rhetorical definition. The primary aim of this is to bring the thing explained into the widest relation with the previous knowledge acquired by the audience. Not only scientific but popular knowledge advances from the known to the unknown. Hence it is the duty of the preacher to know the limits of his people's information on doctrinal and moral subjects, that he may connect what he teaches with what has been already taught them.

Rhetorical definition should be as concrete as it can be made. People are not interested in abstractions and often have a

difficulty in understanding them. Leave, then, those abstract qualities in the subject to which they belong, and describe the subject as affected or modified by them. You will thus impress a more vivid and lasting idea of them than you would do by the most elaborate and detailed definition of them taken apart by themselves. In fact, the uneducated mind deals in abstractions more than is generally thought; but the abstractions are not formally separated from their subject — they are thought of where they are, to the exclusion, however, of all thought of other qualities or elements. Describe even to a child a truthful man, and it will think, not on the man's height, or age, or social standing, or personal appearance, but of something in him that keeps him from lying and makes him tell the truth. The child's mind really abstracts, dwells upon, admires, and possibly resolves to imitate the quality of truthfulness in that man, and it does all this unconsciously and spontaneously, because such abstraction is inseparable from the act of thinking. But speak of truth to that same child and define it as simply and as

fully as you can: yet you will find that you stimulate no interest in it, and that you have much difficulty in holding its attention on your words. Just as we deal with this child, have we also to deal with a grown up audience. Wherever it is possible, we must present persons or objects, not abstractions, to them.

NOTE. It may be objected that description of a person or a mental state cannot be called definition. Certainly not; but it can be used for the purpose of definition. It can portray the living subject to which belongs the abstraction — the virtue, vice, grace, doctrine — we are explaining; and when the attention of the audience is fixed on that abstraction, not as an abstraction, but as a feature of the subject portrayed, then the proper work of definition begins.

ILLUSTRATION. In Cardinal Newman's Discourses there is scarcely any logical, and, apparently, little rhetorical, definition. Yet he defines through his descriptions the finest shades of doctrine with accuracy and fulness. His delineation of Magdalen as a type of love gives us all the essential elements of the virtue, indirectly indeed, but much more vividly and forcibly than any formal definition could give them. I give only a part of the passage here. It is to be found in the Discourse on Purity and Love.

"There is an illustrious third in Scripture, whom we must associate with these two great Apostles" (St. Peter and St. Paul), "when we speak of the saints of penance and love. Who is it but the loving Magdalen? Who is it so fully instances what I am showing, as 'the woman who was a sinner', who watered the Lord's feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair, and anointed them with precious ointment? What a time for such an act! She, who had come into the room, as if for a festive purpose, to go about an act of penance! . . . . . But, lo, a wondrous sight! was it a sudden inspiration, or a mature resolve? was it an act of the moment, or the result of a long conflict? — but behold, that poor, many-colored child of guilt approaches to crown with her sweet ointment the head of Him to whom the feast was given; and see, she has stayed her hand. She has looked, and she discerns the Immaculate, the Virgin's Son, 'the brightness of the Eternal Light, and the spotless mirror of God's majesty'. She looks, and she recognizes the Ancient of Days, the Lord of life and death, her Judge; and again she

looks, and she sees in His face and in His mien a beauty, and a sweetness, awful, serene, majestic, more than that of the sons of men, which paled all the splendor of that festive room. Again she looks, timidly yet eagerly, and she discerns in His eye, and in His smile, the loving-kindness, the tenderness, the compassion, the mercy of the Saviour of men. She looks at herself, and oh! how vile, how hideous is she, who but now was so vain of her attractions! — how withered is that comeliness, of which the praises ran through the mouths of her admirers — how loathsome has become the breath, which hitherto she thought so fragrant, savoring only of those seven bad spirits which dwell within her! And there she would have stayed, there she would have sunk on the earth, wrapped in her confusion and in her despair, had she not cast one glance again on that all-loving, all-forgiving Countenance. He is looking at her: it is the Shepherd looking at the lost sheep, and the lost sheep surrenders herself to Him. He speaks not, but He eyes her; and she draws nearer to Him. Rejoice, ye Angels, she draws near, seeing nothing but

Him, and caring neither for the scorn of the proud, nor the jests of the profligate. She draws near, not knowing whether she shall be saved or not, not knowing whether she shall be received, or what will become of her; this only knowing that He is the Fount of holiness and truth, as of mercy, and salvation; to whom should she go, but to Him who hath the words of eternal life?

. . . . . Wonderful meeting between what was most base and what is most pure! Those wanton hands, those polluted lips, have touched, have kissed the feet of the Eternal, and He shrank not from the homage. And as she hung over them, and as she moistened them from her full eyes, how did her love for One so great, yet so gentle, wax vehement within her, lighting up a flame which never was to die from that moment, even for ever! and what excess did it reach, when He recorded before all men her forgiveness, and the cause of it! 'Many sins are forgiven her, for she loved much; but to whom less is forgiven, the same loveth less. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven thee; thy faith has made thee safe, go in peace.'

"Henceforth, my brethren, love was to her, as to St. Augustine and to St. Ignatius Loyola afterwards (great penitents in their own time), as a wound in the soul, so full of desire as to become anguish. She could not live out of the presence of Him in whom her joy lay: her spirit languished after Him, when she saw him not; and waited on Him silently, reverently, wistfully, when she was in His blissful presence. We read of her (if it was she), on one occasion, sitting at His feet to hear His words and of His testifying that she had chosen that best part which should not be taken away from her. . . . ."

On the surface there is no definition here, nothing more, indeed, than a masterly description of Magdalen's conversion. But in the under-current of thought, always clearly discernible in this eminent preacher's style, you can perceive a conscious purpose to define or point out the principal stages from the depths of sin to the heights of repentant love. In carrying out this purpose, he follows closely the teaching of St. Thomas as given in the Summa (III. quaest. 85, art. 5).

The first office of a rhetorical definition is to explain satisfactorily every term of the proposition or of the part of it (first, second, third point) with which we are dealing. In moral sermons it may frequently seem to us that definition is not required — that it is not only tedious, but nugatory and useless. For instance: here is the proposition of a sermon on the Unprofitable Servant: "Our virtue must be progressive in ourselves; it must be fruitful in others." (Cardinal Wiseman, Sermons on Moral Subjects.) What room, it may be asked, is here for definition? The audience know what virtue is, and in what progressiveness and fruitfulness consist; why then explain these simple terms to them? I acknowledge that simple every-day words need no definition or explanation; I acknowledge also that we should carefully avoid the appearance of affronting our hearers by addressing them as we should a kindergarten class: but I say, that there are not many words used in explaining matters of faith or conduct that do not need to be defined. Take, for example, the word *virtue* in the foregoing proposition: how few have a definite idea of

it? yet how much instruction is contained even in the few lines that any compendium of theology gives about it? "Virtue is the habit of acting in accordance with right order. It is natural or supernatural, infused or acquired, theological or moral. There are four moral virtues called cardinal, under which all other moral virtues may be classed: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance." Such definitions supply numerous vistas of thought branching off from our theme — vistas full of interest and suggestion to the audience.

The second office of rhetorical definition is to give the parts and divisions of the object defined. By parts I mean here the essential elements of the object; and by divisions, the enumeration of all those particular objects which are included in the general object or to which the name of the general object may be applied. For example, in the foregoing definition of virtue, the object defined — virtue — has two parts, or essential elements, namely, habit and conformity to right order. Its divisions are all the various habits to which the name virtue may be applied. Or again: the es-

sential elements of man are soul and body; the divisions of man are all individuals (arranged in classes) to whom the name of man can be extended.

Division, in the sense just explained, is most useful in giving a clear, distinct, and complete idea of the object defined. You are speaking of mortal sin, for instance, and you wish to define the word *mortal*. You say that it is taken from a Latin word signifying death. Mortal sin then, is sin causing death. Now there are two kinds of death, the death of the soul and the death of the body; and the death caused by mortal sin is the former kind of death — the death of the soul. This form of definition is absolutely necessary for the full explanation of the different species of virtues and vices, and for the proper understanding of the numeric distinction of sins.

Rhetorical definition does not confine itself to giving the essence of the object defined; it frequently gives also external manifestations of it, properties that flow from the essence although not a part of it, and even qualities, sometimes but not always found in it.

Illustrations. 1. Father Burke, after showing that Christ always speaks of His Church as a kingdom which He was to establish upon this earth, goes on to define what is contained in this idea of a kingdom. He says: "Now, if we once let into our minds the idea that the Church of Christ is a kingdom, we must at once admit into the idea of the Church an organization which is necessary for every kingdom upon this earth. And what is the first element? I answer that the first element of a nation is to have a head or ruler — call him what you will — elect him as you will. Is it a republic? it must have a president. Is it a monarchy? it must have its king. Is it an empire? it must have its emperor; and so on. But the moment you imagine a State or kingdom of any kind without a head, that moment you destroy out of your mind the very idea of a State united for certain purposes and governed by certain known and acknowledged ideas called laws. That head of the nation must be the supreme tribunal of the nation. From him, in his executive office, all subordinate officers hold their power; and even though he be elected by the

people, and chosen from among the people, the moment he is set at the head of the State or nation, that moment he is the representative or embodiment of the fountain of authority. Every one wielding power within that nation must bow to him. Every one exercising jurisdiction within that nation must derive it from him. He, I say again, may derive it even from the choice of the people; but when he is thus elevated, he forms one unit, to which everything in the State is bound to look up. This is the very first idea and notion which the word State or kingdom involves."

2. The same preacher defines in the following words the kind of progress which the Church condemns: "There is another kind of progress; and the Church is opposed to it. God is opposed to it. What is it? It is progress of a pseudo-intellectual kind. It is progress that involves that diabolical 'Spiritualism' — dealing with spirits, whether good or bad — and the superstition that arises from it; it is the progress that results in what is called the doctrine of 'free love' — the progress that unsexes the woman; that sends her into dissecting

rooms, or such unwomanly places, and there debauches her mind, while she is said to be in the pursuit of knowledge; it is the progress that asserts that children are to be brought up from their earliest infancy in such independence, that they are allowed to give the lie to their father or their mother; it is the progress that would assert that politics is a game that men are to enter into for their own private aggrandizement and wealth; it is the progress that would assert that, in commercial intercourse, a man may do a smart thing; although there may be a little tinge of roguery in it; it is the progress that would assert that every man is free to think as he likes on every subject — all this the Church is opposed to."

3. Father Pottgeisser gives the following symptoms of lukewarmness, which he calls a disease of the soul. It will be observed that none of them, taken apart from the others, is an essential characteristic, but merely an accidental quality; yet all combined present a true picture of a tepid man. It should be noted also that rhetorical definition takes here the form of description, being the portrayal of a mental state.

"The lukewarm Christian is *not sensible of his malady*, because his conscience is benumbed. He has a callous conscience. His constant neglect of the service of God, the numberless willful venial sins, which he continued to commit daily, have blunted the edge of his conscience and rendered it all but insensible. His conscience does not reproach him, as long as he perceives no grievous guilt. He has not committed murder, or grave theft, or dishonesty; neither has he committed adultery, nor is he given to drunkenness; he entertains no serious enmities; in short, there is nothing that weighs heavily on his conscience. But his pride and envy, his petty dishonesties, his rather free manner in conversation and society, his intemperance, which never reaches the point of intoxication — all these, and a thousand other venial sins have no terror for his conscience. He has been used to bear all this without misgiving. His conscience is mute, because he carefully avoids everything that awakens it to the danger of his state. If he happens to be present at a sermon, he either abandons himself to all manner of distractions, or

listens only in the capacity of a critic, whom the matter itself does not concern. He never takes a pious book into his hands the whole year round. He never associates with pious and fervent Christians; such society is too dull for him. Even the Sacrament of Penance has no influence over him; for whatever we may think of the worthiness of his confessions, it is certain that his disposition is not such as to secure large and lasting fruit."

Rhetorical definition aims at giving a thorough, comprehensive knowledge of the thing defined. Hence it explains the thing not only in itself but also in its cause or reason and in its effects. Cause or reason, however, means here only such account of the truth defined as makes it appear fitting, probable, plausible to the hearer. It usually consists in one or two texts of Scripture, or in its apt adjustment with something already known or admitted. The effects also to be given are only those that are immediate and obvious and have an important bearing on the definite object of the sermon.

Examples. 1. St. Bernard, speaking of

Heaven, says that there God is to His elect the fulness of light to the intellect, the fulness of peace to the will, and the fulness of duration to the memory. The fulness of light is thus defined: "Ascend into Heaven, O human intelligence: behold there the light, behold there the truth unclouded, behold there all thy longings satisfied. When thou hast contemplated God in His nature and attributes, thou wilt be permitted to see Him in His three adorable Persons. The profound mysteries of the Incarnation, of predestination, of grace will be unveiled to thee; thou wilt be shown the justice of God's dealings with the just as well as with sinners. What, exclaims St. Gregory, will be hidden from those who behold Him that seeth all things? *Quid est quod non vident qui videntem omnia vident?* We shall penetrate, says St. Paul, to the inmost sanctuary within the veil—*usque ad interiora velaminis;* where the sun has no setting and the moon no decrease; that is, the truth shines there with eternal splendor, visible and comprehensible to all—the truth of things divine, the truth of things human, the truth of the uncomprehended things of this world and

of eternity, the truth naked, absolute, entire, such as our intelligence demands. 'In Thy light we shall see the light'."

2. St. John Chrysostom, treating of the fear of God, says: "The fear of God regulates and controls the thoughts, shrinks from sin, is the safeguard of innocence, and the source of all good."

Rhetorical definition has not completed its work when it has given the hearer a clear, distinct, complete, and comprehensive knowledge of the truth developed. It has still to stamp that knowledge on the mind and heart. A single blow of a hammer may fix the point of a nail in wood; but it takes repeated blows to drive the nail home. This driving home process, as applied to the enforcement of truth defined, is called in recent works on rhetoric amplification. "In the construction of the plan," writes Professor Genung, "the main ideas of the discourse have been determined, in their mutual relations, from beginning to end. As yet, however, they are expressed only in germ. They need to be taken up anew and endowed with life; to be clothed in a fitting dress of explanatory, illustrative, and en-

forcing thought. This is the office of rhetorical amplification." Among the old rhetoricians, the word was used in a much narrower sense. "*Amplificatio*," says Cicero, "*est gravior quaedam affirmatio, qae motu animorum conciliat in dicendo fidem.*" Rev. T. Potter, in his valuable work on Sacred Eloquence, confines amplification to the development of arguments. "Although," he writes, "the effect of our reasoning depends very much upon the due selection and arrangement of our arguments, it depends still more upon their amplification, or, in other words, upon the force, vigor, beauty, and practical application with which they are put." Dr. Phelps, on the other hand, does not use the word at all in his Theory of Preaching; and I think he is right. Its present acceptation in rhetoric makes it cover every process by which thought is developed; it includes, therefore, the entire body of a discourse, and it would be illogical to narrow it to an aid or adjunct of definition. Therefore, whenever I shall have occasion to use the word I will use it only in its generic sense of expansion — enlargement.

Various means are adopted in preaching to give volume, body, force to a thought and to give the hearer time to take it in and digest and assimilate it. Rhetorical definition draws freely on the resources of Illustration for this purpose; but as we shall treat of these in the next chapter, we need not dwell on them here. There is one means, however, namely, Repetition, which is closely allied to definition, and is of sufficient importance to demand separate and detailed treatment.

Repetition, indeed, in one or other of its forms is the ordinary method by which definition is enlarged. But it does not consist in mere reiteration; it adds something to the elucidation already given in definiteness, or volume, or impressiveness. It arrests the movement, or progressive growth, of thought in the sermon; and should, therefore, be sparingly employed. Though absolutely necessary to make definition effective, it is from its very nature apt to become tiresome if not skilfully managed. The skill consists chiefly in adding something new and striking to the central thought, and, as far as possible, putting what is added in the climactic order.

When preparing this part of a sermon, we must not expect to derive any direct help from rhetorical rules or suggestions. The truth to be expanded and enforced by repetition must be a live, fecund, spiritual thought; and we must have a glowing, passionate desire and resolve to plant it deep in the souls of our hearers. Such desire will often urge to anomalous forms of repetition; but often also it will be guided by rules that conviction and experience together with frequent use have made a second nature to us. Hence, it is advisable for young preachers to make themselves acquainted with those rules (as far as they can be formulated), and to exercise themselves frequently in the application of them. A better practice still would be to find out rules for repetition for one's self by reading and analyzing the sermons of eminent preachers, and also by studying minutely those numerous passages of Sacred Scripture in which this mode of expansion and enforcement is employed with inimitable skill.

NOTE. No book of sermons is required for this practice. The Lessons of the Breviary supply abundant examples of sublime Christian eloquence. Read espe-

cially the extracts from St. John Chrysostom, St. Leo the Great and St. Bernard.

The first and most usual mode of repetition is the accumulation of *predicates*, each throwing light on the subject defined. We have an example of this mode in the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, too well known, perhaps, to be quoted here; yet I give the words to make reference to them convenient.

Charity is patient, is kind: Charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely: is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed.

Here we have seven qualities or characteristics predicated of charity, namely, patience, kindness, sympathy, strength, faith, hope, endurance.

Another example of this form of repetition is the following taken from Father Burke:

"As the apostle pithily and forcibly puts it, '*Habemus altare*' — we have an altar — not merely a place of prayer, not merely a table whereon to commemorate in a shadowy and most inefficient manner the recollection of the greatest act that ever took place on this earth,

but a true and real altar of sacrifice, solemnly consecrated with the outpouring of oil and the voice of prayer — an altar on which the blood of a victim flows in real sacrifice, an altar before which an accredited and anointed priest, sacrificing, takes his stand — an altar whereon is consummated the highest and the great central mystery of our religion — an altar, therefore, of all places on this earth the most holy and the most solemn — an altar of the holy Catholic Church."

A second form of repetition is the expansion of the *subject*. If this be a generical term, the specific terms it contains or many of them are enumerated. St. Paul gives us an example of this form also in the eight chapter of his Epistle to the Romans:

"Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . . . I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

A third form is to repeat the subject or the predicate considered in various lights (essence, characteristics, sources, causes, effects, etc.) Thus, in the statement: Grace is necessary for salvation, the subject grace may be spoken of as divine mercy, God's helping hand, the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, or the Precious Blood, the

wedding garment, etc. The predicate, too, may be expanded into these phrases: the only means of salvation; our only hope of Heaven, of ever seeing our Father's face, of enjoying the society of the elect, of escaping eternal punishment, of attaining the end of our being.

A fourth form enumerates *various circumstances* of the subject or predicate, bringing it into greater distinctness. The following passage from Cardinal Newman illustrates this form:

"Next, this follows from what I have said: — that since He is from everlasting, and has created all things from a certain beginning, He has lived in an eternity before He began to create anything. What a wonderful thought is this! there was a state of things in which God was by Himself, and nothing else but He. There was no earth, no sky, no sun, no stars, no space, no time, no beings of any kind: no men, no Angels, no Seraphim. His throne was without ministers; He was not waited on by any; all was silence, all was repose, there was nothing but God; and this state continued not for a while only, but for a measureless duration; it was a state which had ever been; it was the rule of things, and creation had been an innovation upon it. Creation is, comparatively speaking, but of yesterday; it has lasted a poor six thousand years, say sixty thousand, if you will, or six million, or six million million; what is this to eternity? nothing at all; not so much as a drop compared to the whole ocean, or a grain of sand compared to the whole earth. I say,

through a whole eternity God was by Himself, with no other being but Himself; with nothing external to Himself, not working, but at rest, not speaking, not receiving homage from any, not glorified in creatures, but blessed in Himself and by Himself, and wanting nothing."

The fifth form of repetition consists in *denying* to the subject or predicate some characteristics or qualities that might otherwise be attributed to it. We have an example of this in the passage from St. Paul on Charity, already quoted. There he declares the idea of charity to be irreconcilable with envy, boasting, vanity, ambition, self-seeking, etc. Again: in a sermon on Meekness, this form might be advantageously used as follows: "Blessed are the meek; blessed are they who do not resent injuries, who do not harbor malice, who return not evil for evil — blow for blow, who rejoice not in the misfortune of their enemy, who wish him no harm but every blessing, who when slighted or insulted give not way to the promptings of nature, but, trampling them under foot, rise to the sublimity of forgiveness. Blessed are the meek."

In every form of repetition care must be taken to avoid the introduction of any new

or independent statement that would draw off the mind from the truth presented, or dissipate the energy of attention. Much practical judgment is also required to determine the extent to which repetition is to be used in the development of a truth. To give various presentments of every truth enunciated would as much outrage good taste, as to lay emphasis on every word in a sentence. Such excess would frustrate the end of repetition and emphasis alike.

The habit of clear and accurate thinking is the foundation of clear and accurate definition, and is therefore an essential element in the equipment of every preacher. Six years' training in philosophy and theology might be reasonably thought sufficient to mould the seminarian's mind in such a habit; yet we know from experience that it does not always do so. This is not the place to inquire into the cause of the failure; but it will not be amiss to make here a few suggestions as to the best means of acquiring or preserving the habit I speak of. First, when collecting matter for your sermon, reject any thoughts, as unavailable, that you do not clearly and thoroughly un-

derstand. Better a hundred times for the people is meagre and clear, than full and confused, knowledge. Secondly, draw a sharp line between your knowledge and your ignorance; and place on the side of ignorance whatever you are not sure of or cannot account for or cannot express adequately in clear and accurate language. Thirdly, cultivate mental activity by feeling dissatisfied with half truths and by sparing no reasonable effort to convert them into knowledge. Fourthly, read for the most part only books that will make you think. The habit of desultory reading, especially of newspapers and novels, leads inevitably to mental paralysis. Fifthly, aim at clearness and accuracy in ordinary conversation. Make no miserable pretense of knowing more than you do know. In the discussion of social, political, or theological questions, strive not for victory *per fas aut nefas:* strive rather for truth and light.

CHAPTER XIII.

Illustration.

Illustration is the second stage in the process of exposition. In aim it agrees with definition, as both seek to make some truth as distinct and luminous as possible; but they differ in the means they adopt, as well as in the kind of knowledge they impart. Definition uses analysis of the truth itself; illustration uses comparison of it with related truths. The former gives absolute knowledge of the truth; the latter adds relative knowledge, that is, knowledge derived from the relations between the truth illustrated and other truths previously acquired. The only relations that I shall dwell on here are those of similarity and contrast.

NOTE. Deviation from the ordinary form of unimpassioned language to illustrate or enforce a truth is called a figure of speech. The old rhetoricians distinguished about forty figures of speech which they divided almost equally into word-figures and thought-figures. Modern writers on the art of composition have wisely reduced that number to some twelve or fourteen. These they divide into two classes — those that promote

clearness and those whose object is emphasis. In the former they place metonomy, simile, metaphor, personification, and allegory; in the latter, exclamation, interrogation, apostrophe, hyperbole, irony, antithesis, epigram, and climax. Of course, these figures are as available and as necessary for preaching as they are for other forms of discourse. They should, therefore, be studied in books of rhetoric and the rules for their proper use should be applied in daily exercises until they become, as it were, a second nature to the young preacher. He must be careful, however, to exercise discretion and taste in employing them in his sermons. Hyperbole and irony are scarcely permissible in the pulpit; and most figures of emphasis should be introduced only in the emotional part of a sermon.

Illustration may be divided into figurative and non-figurative. As the former belongs to elementary rhetoric, it is not necessary to discuss it here; the latter, then, will form the subject-matter of this chapter.

Non-figurative Illustration consists of comparison, contrast, analogy, example, experience, and quotation. These forms serve a double purpose they explain and they prove. In popular oratory, indeed, they are employed almost exclusively for argument, to bring conviction home to an audience. As we cannot recognize an attitude of unbelief or doubt toward our teaching, we must use them ostensibly for exposition alone. But this is not to prevent us from

keeping in view and promoting their secondary and indirect effect — the confirmation, roundness, and satisfactoriness they give to Catholic belief.

A few words must be said here about association of ideas, because on this chiefly depends a preacher's success in illustration. Ideas and words have a very different suggestive power for different minds. To some all mental impressions are separate and almost independent entities in the soul. General ideas or truths do not suggest any of the particular ideas or truths contained in them; objects are not associated with objects, facts are not associated with facts; and, much less, neither facts, objects, words, nor ideas in one order are associated with those corresponding to them in another order. This mental sluggishness, whether natural or contracted, must be shaken off by all who aspire to become efficient preachers. Unless they do this, their sermons will be prosaic and uninteresting. They should study literature of the imaginative and impassioned type, and practise composition in it as frequently as possible. In ordinary conversation, they should keep

their minds on the alert in active search of related truths, facts, etc., so as to be able to illustrate what they say by reference to previous knowledge. A good will and a strong determination to succeed will enable them in the end to so connect associated ideas that the conception of one will spontaneously suggest the others. Among preachers I know no one who surpasses Massillon in this association of ideas.

NOTE. In English literature, De Quincey and Macaulay stand high above all other writers of this century for their wealth of illustration. In the latter this was due to a prodigious memory; the former attributes the characteristic in his case to "a logical instinct for feeling in a moment the secret analogies or parallelisms that connected things else apparently remote." In another place he tells us it "was due to the higher faculty of an electric aptitude for seizing analogies, and, by means of those aerial pontoons, passing over like lightning from one topic to another." (See Minto's Manual of English Prose Literature, p. 39.)

If those I have spoken of above need to be stimulated to mental alertness, others run into the opposite extreme and have to be moderated. To these almost every presentive word opens one or more vistas of related thought. They realize abstractions only as collections of associated concrete notions; so that when an abstract term is

mentioned, their minds see in it only the individual objects, facts, or ideas for which it stands. This class of men is the material out of which orators are made. But such singular power of word and thought association must be kept within bounds, or those gifted with it may easily degenerate into flippant, verbose talkers. They must be guided by the demands of good taste, of harmony and proportion of members, and of uniform growth in their sermons.

Comparison bears a close resemblance to simile, so close, indeed, that each shades into the other and sometimes can scarcely be distinguished from it. In both, two objects, facts, or truths are set side by side, resembling each other in one or more points. In comparison, however, those two objects, facts, or truths belong to the same class; in simile, they belong to different classes. Thus, if I say, John is like James, I use comparison; but if I say, John is brave as a lion, I use simile.

NOTE. This rhetorical distinction need not be taken into account in preaching. What we are to look to is the appositeness and illustrative power of the relation.

It is a revealed truth that the invisible world is clearly seen in the visible world

around us. We are authorized, then, to prove and, *a fortiori*, to illustrate the truths of natural religion by the phenomena and laws of mind and matter. Even revealed truth may be illustrated by the same means, provided we do not encourage thereby a rationalizing spirit that would seek a reason for "the mystery of God the Father and of Christ Jesus," formulated in the terms of a mathematical solution. Whatever may be the evolution of theology in the future, Christian faith must always be imperfect vision. Comparison illustrates either *a majori* or *a pari*.

EXAMPLES. "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" If earthly fire given for man's use be terrible to bear, what must eternal fire be, created not for comfort but for punishment? "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee." "Did Abraham believe that a son should be born to him of his aged wife? then Mary's faith must be held as greater when she accepted Gabriel's message. Did Judith consecrate her widowhood to God to the surprise of her people? much more did Mary, from her first youth, devote her virginity. Did Samuel, when a child, inhabit the temple, secluded from the world? Mary too was by her parents lodged in the same holy precincts, even at the age when children first can choose between good and evil. Was Solomon on his birth called 'dear to the

Lord?' and shall not the destined Mother of God be dear to Him from the moment she was born? But further still; St. John Baptist was sanctified by the Spirit before his birth; shall Mary be only equal to him? is it not fitting that her privilege should surpass his? is it wonderful, if grace, which anticipated his birth by three months, should in her case run up to the very first moment of her being, outstrip the imputation of sin, and be beforehand with the usurpation of Satan?" Newman.

When we place two objects, facts, or truths, — the one familiar and the other unfamiliar — side by side, and assert that certain characteristics or qualities of the former belong also to the latter, we illustrate by *a pari* comparison (or simile). For example, human and divine hope may be thus compared: "Suppose a boy hears of some toy capable of doing the most wonderful things. He feels at once an *affection* for that toy; he *desires* very much to have it; he *determines* to ask for it at the first opportunity; he *expects*, nay, *is sure* that his father, if asked, will procure it for him. Here there are five distinct acts: love of the object, desire to have it, resolution to use the best means to secure it, expectation, and certainty. Now, instead of the toy put eternal happiness; instead of the earthly

father put our Father who is in Heaven; instead of the child's resolution, expectation, and confidence, put our resolution to pray, our patient expectation, and our absolute certainty that we shall receive what we ask: and we have all the essential elements of an act of Christian hope." The *habit* of hope may be illustrated in a similar manner by comparing it to the *state* of expectation in which the child lives awaiting the desired gift.

The following from Cardinal Newman's Discourse on "Prospects of the Catholic Missioner" is an example of historical comparison.

"It is true, my brethren, this is a strange time, a strange place, for beginning our work. . . . . Yes, it is all very strange to the world; but no new thing to her, the bride of the Lamb, whose very being and primary gifts are stranger in the eyes of unbelief, than any details, as to place of abode and method of proceeding, in which they are manifested. . . . . In such a time as this did the prince of the Apostles, the first Pope, advance toward the heathen city, where, under a Divine guidance, he was to fix his seat. . . . . In such a time as this did the great Doctor, St. Gregory Nazianzen, he too an old man, a timid man, a retiring man, fond of solitude and books, and unpractised in the struggles of the world, suddenly appear in the Arian city of Constantinople; and in despite of a fanatical populace, and an heretical clergy, preach the truth,

and prevail — to his own wonder, and to the glory of that grace which is strong in weakness, and is ever nearest to its triumph when it is most despised. In such a time did another St. Gregory, the first Pope of the name, when all things were now failing, when barbarians had occupied the earth, and fresh and more savage multitudes were pouring down, when pestilence, famine, and heresy ravaged far and near — oppressed as he was with continual sickness, his bed his Pontifical Throne — in such a time did he rule, direct and consolidate the Church, in what he augured were the last moments of the world; subduing Arians in Spain, Donatists in Africa, a third heresy in Egypt, a fourth in Gaul, humbling the pride of the East, reconciling the Goths to the Church, bringing our own pagan ancestors within her pale, and completing her order and beautifying her ritual, while he strengthened the foundations of her power. And in such a time did the six Jesuit Fathers, Ignatius and his companions, while the world was exulting in the Church's fall, and 'men made merry, and sent their gifts one to another,' because the prophets were dead who 'tormented them that dwelt upon earth,' make their vow in the small church of Montmartre; and, attracting others to them by the sympathetic force of zeal, and the eloquence of sanctity, went forward calmly and silently into India in the East, and into America in the West, and while they added whole nations to the Church abroad, restored and reanimated the Catholic populations at home."

Contrast, like comparison, is the juxtaposition of objects, facts, or truths of the same class; but it differs from it in being the juxtaposition of opposites, or extremes.

Vice and virtue, happiness and misery, the just and sinners, are examples of this form of illustration. "Everything," says Abp. Whately, "is rendered more striking by contrast; and almost every kind of subject-matter affords *materials* for contrasted expressions. Truth is *opposed* to error; wise conduct to foolish; different causes often produce opposite effects; different circumstances dictate to prudence opposite conduct; opposite impressions may be made by the same object on different minds; and every extreme is opposed both to the mean and to the other extreme."

The state of a soul devoid of faith and sanctifying grace may be described, to illustrate all that is involved in their possession. The misery and disorder of a drunkard's home shows the blessings of temperance in a strong light. The civil punishment and social degradation following a career of crime will often open men's eyes to the beauty of the opposite virtue more effectually than a hundred texts from Sacred Scripture and the Fathers. Hence contrast is a favorite mode of illustration with preachers; it is a natural resource not

only of oratory but of every form of composition; and its alternation of light and shade, if managed with taste and skill, may be made highly artistic.

EXAMPLES. 1. The first Psalm, *Beatus vir*, gives a beautiful specimen of a well developed contrast.

Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor set in the chair of pestilence. But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper. Not so the wicked, not so: but like the dust, which the wind driveth from the face of the earth. Therefore the wicked shall not rise again in judgment: nor sinners in the council of the just. For the Lord knoweth the way of the just: and the way of the wicked shall perish.

2. "The Holy Ghost who is the principle of the supernatural life in man, will not compromise or come to an understanding with the world and nature. His lessons to the Christian soul are directly contradictory to those of nature and the world. They say there is no higher order than that naturally known by his reason to man on earth; the Divine Spirit affirms that there is a higher order, and that the whole natural order must, if occasion requires, be sacrificed to the supernatural welfare of the soul. The world and nature are averse to, and violently repugn against, any kind of mortification of the senses or the will of man; the Holy Ghost declares that the Christian's whole life on earth must be

one of constant self-denial, submission, and sacrifice. The world and nature want pleasure, the pleasure of indolence, the pleasure of flattery, the pleasure of many friends, of state, of office, of the first places; the Holy Ghost declares that the Christian's first duty is to carry his cross in his life, that life is a serious thing, that death is the time for rendering our account, that on this earth we have to suffer in order to enjoy in Heaven a recompense which shall be eternal. The world and nature do not wish to be controlled; they wish to think for themselves and to speak for themselves, on all subjects, though the truth is, that those who are their votaries are the dragslaves of public opinion, and the blind followers of the blind. The Spirit of God says, that there is but one truth, that what men should wish is, not to be independent of direction, but to know the truth, honestly to seek nothing but the truth, the truth in natural science and social problems, and the truth in religious inquiry, in order to accept, embrace, and execute the mandates of truth." (Discourses from the Pulpit.)

Example is the most effective form of illustration. It is a narrative of some occurrence calculated to throw light on the truth we are expounding. It usually has a culminating point of interest, to stimulate attention; and it should always present some striking feature of resemblance with whatever it illustrates; — in other words, it should be apposite. It should, moreover, be chosen with prudence. The character and prejudices of the audience ought to be

taken into account; and anything that might arouse opposition or create disgust ought to be carefully avoided.

NOTE. If we have reason to think that the people we are addressing hesitate to believe in extraordinary manifestations of the supernatural outside the Written Word, we should by all means seek a fitting opportunity to warn them of the danger of such an attitude of mind. But, until we shall have done so, we should choose no examples that would be likely to excite incredulity or repugnance. And yet we must not run into the opposite extreme, and avoid all mention of supernatural occurrences in the lives of the Saints and the history of the Church. Such omission would be likely to create scandal and might promote a spirit of rationalism. Besides, it would come either from a want of strong faith or a want of moral courage in the preacher. Either want would be deplorable.

No example based on questionable authority should be used. Nothing but truth, even in the smallest details, should ever be heard from our pulpits. We have no excuse for deviating from this rule. The Bible and authentic history, ecclesiastical and civil, together with the carefully written lives of great and holy men, supply us with abundant sources of examples without going to look for others in the shadow-land of popular tradition and legend. Neither are we allowed to exaggerate details for the purpose of effect. Facts seldom oc-

cur in real life with the artistic roundness and finish that fiction gives them. Some popular non-Catholic preachers seem not to be aware of this truth, and they give anecdotes from personal experience, so telling and apposite, and so classical in their observance of the unities, that to claim belief in them as actual occurrences is an insult to common sense, a profanity of truth, an outrage on the Gospel. Such preachers acquire a short-lived popularity; but they have no influence on Christian faith and conduct.

Still, though so much abused, examples from everyday life will always hold an important place in the sermons of every live preacher who knows human nature and the many-strand cords by which it is drawn to God. When he reads the newspaper and visits his people in their homes and hears local gossip — as he will often have to hear it — he will be on the alert to find illustrative matter for his sermons, and especially familiar examples calculated to make Christian faith and duty more intelligible and interesting. He will take notes of current incidents, as well as of striking

thoughts or events that he will come across in his general reading (the recitation of his breviary included); he will peruse those notes from time to time; and after a little his mind will be enriched with an accumulating fund of practical knowledge and experience that will be of inestimable value to him in his preaching.

An example has frequently to be invented to illustrate a general truth; but when this is done, it should be made plain that it is not given as an actual occurrence.

The value of examples, suitable, pointed, and well applied, in sermons cannot be overstated. "Example," says Burke, "is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other." Our divine Lord taught in parables, which are simply forms of example; and it is hard to understand how those who carry on the work of the Gospel which He began, presume to improve on His method of instruction by excluding, as if by design, all examples from their sermons. By doing so, they certainly do not strengthen or enlarge the influence of the pulpit. "The place of parable in teaching," says Drummond, "and especially

after the sanction of the greatest of Teachers, must always be recognized. The very necessities of language indeed demand this method of presenting truth. The temporal is the husk and framework of the eternal, and thoughts can be uttered only through things." Trench, in his work on Parables, goes farther and gives them "a measure of evidential as well as illustrative value." "The parable," he writes, "or other analogy to spiritual truth appropriated from the world of nature or man, is not merely illustrative, but also in some sort proof. It is not merely that these analogies assist to make the truth intelligible or, if intelligible before, present it more vividly to the mind, which is all that some will allow them. Their power lies deeper than this, in the harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and which all deeper minds have delighted to trace, between the natural and spiritual worlds, so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations happily but yet arbitrarily chosen. They are arguments, and may be alleged as witnesses; the world of nature being through-

out a witness for the world of spirit, proceeding from the same hand, growing out of the same root, and being constituted for the same end."

The application of an example to the truth illustrated should be made in a few clear, pithy words. Few things in a sermon are more tiresome than lengthy explanations of illustrative matter. Illustrations should be themselves explanatory; and the people may be credited with the intelligence necessary to see their application, at least with the aid of a brief comment by the preacher.

NOTE. A preacher has to guard against the excessive use of examples, especially of anecdotes taken from the records of every day life. A profusion of these is apt to lead an audience to suspect that the sermon is intended for entertainment rather than for instruction and persuasion. Yet anecdotes in the Catholic pulpit will never deserve the following severe criticism of Professor Mahaffy in his work on the "Decay of Modern Preaching" (p. 125): "To this feeling, the *Excessive love of Variety*, may be ascribed the vulgar habit of introducing anecdotes in the pulpit, — anecdotes, which are not only foolish and beside the point, but often practically untrue, inasmuch as the preacher always explains the facts, and the explanation may be palpably invented. Anecdotage in the pulpit gratifies only the most ignorant and vulgar of hearers, and from vulgar I mean to exclude all those, of how-

ever low degree, who come to hear seriously for the sake of spiritual benefit."

The following is a fair specimen of an anecdote well adapted for pulpit use; but it would be more telling if authenticated by details of time, place, and witnesses.

"On the deck of a foundering vessel stood a negro slave. The last man left on board, he was about to step into the life-boat. She was laden to the gunwale, to the water's edge. Bearing in his arms what seemed a heavy bundle, the boat's crew who with difficulty kept her afloat in the roaring sea, refused to receive him. If he come it must be unencumbered and alone, on that they insisted. He must either leave that bundle and leap in, or throw it in and stay to perish. Pressing it to his bosom, he opened its folds; and there, warmly wrapped, lay two little children, whom their father had committed to his care. He kissed them, and bade the sailors carry his affectionate farewell to his master, telling him how faithfully he had fulfilled his charge. Then lowering the children into the boat, which pushed off, the dark man stood alone on the deck, to go down with the sinking ship, a noble example of bravery, and true fidelity, and the 'love that seeketh not its own'."

Quotation is generally used to prove or enforce truth; but it is equally available for illustrating it. Water is clearest at its fountainhead: truth is most luminous when it issues fresh from the lips of God. The Bible is God's word; what we preach is also His word: what more fitting, then,

what more reasonable or effectual than to interpret and illustrate His message in His own words? However eloquent we may be, however extensive our reading and capacious our memory, we shall never find in human knowledge or in the pathos and tragedy of human life, material for illustrating our sermons equal in light and force to that which Sacred Scripture supplies. Many of St. Bernard's "Sermons" are mosaics formed out of Scripture texts, and all have the tone and flavor and coloring of the inspired word; hence, of all the Fathers, Latin and Greek, he is the brightest, as well as the most beautiful and attractive; and his spoken words, as they have come down to us, seem to have lost nothing of the fervor and unction of their first delivery.

It is, I trust, unnecessary to dilate on the obvious advantages and importance of focusing, so to say, all the light we can gather from the words of Scripture on whatever truth we are propounding. Nor are we confined to the literal sense of a sacred text when we use it for illustration. For this purpose, we are authorized by the

example of the inspired writers themselves to use what our commentators call the *sensus accommodatitius*.

Short, pithy texts are better adapted for illustration than long passages; and incidents or occurrences are, perhaps, more telling than either. These, however, belong to another kind of illustration, namely, example or comparison.

The Fathers and other spiritual writers are full of felicitous expressions exquisitely suited to throw light on any subject we have to develop. It is not of much practical use to recommend the reading of the former to an American priest, as the works are beyond his reach. But there are selections from them that can be easily procured; and above all there is the Breviary which we read every day and which contains many of the finest specimens of patristic thought. The continuity with which the Divine Office is to be recited does not prevent us from taking a note of any passage that strikes us while reading. "Quia singulis psalmis," writes D'Annibale in his trenchant style, "immo singulis psalmi versiculis inest propria et ab aliis discreta significatio, quaevis

interruptio caret letali: quin et levi, si vel longior non fuerit; vel ex causa honesta quamvis non gravi." (Summula, pars III. p. 141.) Such notes would grow imperceptibly into a veritable *thesaurus patrum*, which would supply valuable aid in the preparation of a sermon. Of course, striking Scripture texts might be taken in a similar manner; yet it is best to collect these from the vernacular version of the Bible.

Quotations from profane writers seem to have the sanction of St. Paul, who in his address to the Athenians cited some of their own poets. When we have to preach to an audience constituted like that which he confronted, we are free to refer to any authority that our hearers respect; but when we speak to a Catholic audience, I think we can rarely quote a purely literary work without more or less impropriety,

We sometimes hear preachers giving quotations in Latin before they give the English version. The practice has no reason to support it and in my judgment ought to be discontinued.

CHAPTER XIV.

Historical Development.

I have already said that formal proof is out of place in a sermon to a Catholic audience. Such proof would logically imply either doubt or incredulity in the hearers; and in matters of faith or morals, whether explicitly defined or universally taught through the Church, neither doubt nor incredulity can be recognized or permitted. A Catholic's motive for his belief is the *veracitas Dei revelantis;* and to add other motives to this is somewhat analogous to proving to a man that fire burns or the sun shines or heat is not cold. What the people want is clear, full, satisfactory knowledge regarding the infallible authority of the Church and the consequent credibility of her teaching. Bring this knowledge home to them as a first principle, and you will have no need to prove any doctrinal or moral truth you announce. Your com-

mission to teach the Gospel is sufficient guarantee to them of the certainty of your teaching.

Yet human reason does not rest in faith as its normal condition. It aspires to *knowledge* of the truth believed; and although it awaits, in silence and in hope, for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, still it searches earnestly for all the knowledge it can acquire regarding what it sees now through a glass in a dark manner.

This natural and legitimate longing of the Christian soul can be fully satisfied only in eternity. The faithful know this and acquiesce in it; and it helps them to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to look with straining eyes for the blessed hope and coming of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. But meanwhile, we can do much to help them. We can point out to them that "it is a great evidence of truth, in the case of revealed teaching, that it is so consistent, that it so hangs together, that one thing springs out of another, that each part requires and is required by the rest." (Newman.)

But, what is more helpful still and more

satisfying to the faithful, is this: In the leading dogmas of faith and the cardinal principles of Christian morals, we can take them back to the days when the Son of God dwelt among us, visible in the flesh; we can place them before Him, and they can listen to Him as He announced the mystery or truth that we His ministers and ambassadors are now announcing. We can point out the occasion and circumstances and the very words of the original revelation in the written record of it dictated by God Himself. We can show them the same revelation taught in the early Church, impugned perhaps by heresy, but defended, explained and developed, until after the heresy, like a lopped branch, had crumbled to dust, the truth shone out clearer and brighter than before. It is mentioned in symbols of the faith and in the writings of the Fathers; St. Cyprian preaches it in Carthage, St. Gregory in Neo-Caesarea, St. Ambrose in Milan, St. Augustine in Hippo, St. John Chrysostom in Constantinople; and so down the centuries, in the East and in the West, from the Elbe to the Nile, by the cultured Greek and the barbarous Goth,

the truth we now teach has been always taught and believed as part of that revelation which Christ entrusted to His Church, to enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

The perpetuity and universality of a revealed truth, historically unfolded, is, then, a material help to the faithful in satisfying, as far as can be done, their craving for fuller knowledge and comprehension. We should, therefore, after the definition and illustration of whatever truth we are engaged in teaching, give its development from its first written record — generally in Sacred Scripture — down, from century to century, till we reach our own day; when we should dilate on the world-wide communion of the Church—on the hundreds of millions of the human race, of all countries, of all ages, of all degrees and professions, united with us at this moment in one common belief in the doctrine we announce. "It is," says Moehler, in his "Symbolism," "with the profoundest love, reverence, and devotion, the Catholic embraces the Church . . . . . The idea of community, in the first place, satisfies his feelings and his imagina-

tion, and in the second place, is equally agreeable to his reason; while, in the third place, the living appropriation of this idea by his will appears to him to concur with the highest religious and ethical duty of humanity. . . . . No more beautiful object presents itself to the imagination of the Catholic — none more agreeably captivates his feelings, than the image of the harmonious inter-workings of countless spirits, who, though scattered over the whole globe, endowed with freedom and possessing the power to strike off into every deviation to the right or to the left, yet, preserving still their various peculiarities, constitute one great brotherhood for the advancement of each other's spiritual existence — representing one idea, that of the reconciliation of men with God, who on that account have been reconciled with one another, and are become one body. (Eph. iv., 11–16.). . . . But who can deem it a matter of astonishment, that Catholics should be filled with joy and hope, and enraptured at the view of the beautiful construction of their Church, (and that they) should contemplate with delight that grand corporation which they

form, since the philosophers of art declare, that the beautitul is only *truth manifested and embodied.* . . . . Yet it is not merely the imagination and the feelings of the Catholic which are contented by this idea of the Church, but his reason also is thereby satisfied — —"

This historical development of doctrine will not only satisfy the earnest believer, but it will also enable him to defend his faith with intelligence and to vindicate the teaching of the Church against current misrepresentations and calumnies. "Argumentation," as I have stated already, has no place in the Sunday sermon; but historical development gives all the information that could be conveyed under the form of the most convincing proof, while it implies no wavering or unbelief on the part of the hearer, creates no critical temper in him, — on the contrary, enamors him of his faith, makes it his pride, his glory, his invaluable treasure.

The moral life of the Church belongs to her history, at least as much as her political relations with civil society; yet comparatively little is known in detail about the

practice of the Christian virtues in individual and family life, about the reception of the Sacraments, and about the observance of ecclesiastical discipline, in the past ages of the Church. In moral sermons, therefore, the history of a virtue or vice must be for the most part confined to the evidences of its revelation in Sacred Scripture. We have, of course, edifying examples of the heroic practice of all the virtues in the lives of the saints; but those examples belong more appropriately to illustration.

The history of a doctrinal truth should be given with clearness, simplicity, accuracy and concreteness. Digressions, metaphysical niceties, vague or ambiguous phraseology, and all unnecessary abstract reasoning are out of place here. As history is mainly occupied with facts, the history of doctrine ought to consist of these rather than of textual exegesis, although this too is necessary and should be given briefly in the form of a carefully prepared paraphrase. The style most suitable is the conversational — as far removed as possible from intemperate invective and self-confident dogmatism. The tone and delivery should be earnest, animated, and persuasive.

The Scriptural source of a doctrine ought to be the first given. For this any treatise on dogmatic theology will supply abundant texts. It is not the number of those texts that tells with an audience, as much as the obviousness of their application to the truth we are expounding. Let us seek out, then, one or two of the most applicable, and either omit the others or introduce them informally in our paraphrase of those we select. When there are two texts equally relevant, one from the Gospels and the other from the Epistles, it is best to quote both, as we thus consult for the movement of the history we are giving.

Texts that we intend to use in preaching should never be taken on trust from the books in which they are quoted. They should be read in the Bible itself and studied in connexion with their contexts. This will give us a confidence in explaining them that we should not otherwise feel; but especially it will save us from all danger of misquotation.

I stated in the last chapter that for the purpose of illustration the words of a text may be extended beyond their primary in-

clusion and adapted to objects, facts or truths which the sacred writer had not before his mind. Such adaptation is altogether out of place in this department of exposition. "*Nunquam licet sensum*," writes Cornely, "*quem per accommodationem verbis Scripturae ingerimus, pro vera et genuina Spiritus Sancti sententia aliis obtrudere; quare in dogmatum demonstratione aut confirmatione accommodationi non est locus.*" What we are to look for, then, in the Scripture text or passage we adduce is its literal, or historical, sense — the sense intended to be conveyed directly by the words. To find this sense, we should study the words of the text according to the laws of hermeneutics. However, as few priests have time for such original study, it is, generally speaking, sufficient to read carefully the interpretation of the text given in some approved commentary. We, next, read the context and find out its relation to the passage we intend to quote. We note also the circumstances of the revelation — the speaker, the audience, the time, the place, etc. When we have thus mastered the text in its meaning, scope, relations, and most important circumstances, it yet

remains to paraphrase it in as clear, popular, and pointed a form as possible. The exact meaning of the words must be given with precision; their application to the truth we are expounding, must be made obvious; and the diction and phraseology must be so simple, that it will be impossible to misunderstand them.

EXAMPLES. 1. "... Hence it is that St. Paul, as feeling the majesty of that new nature which is imparted to us, addresses himself in a form of indignation to those who forget it. 'What!' he says, 'what! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?' As if he said, 'Can you be so mean-spirited and base-minded as to dishonor yourselves in the devil's service? Should we not pity the man of birth, or station, or character, who degraded himself in the eyes of the world, who forfeited his honor, broke his word, or played the coward? And shall not we, from mere sense of propriety, be ashamed to defile our spiritual purity, the royal blood of the second Adam, with deeds of darkness? Let us leave it to the hosts of evil spirits, to the haters of Christ, to eat the dust of the earth all the days of their life. Cursed are they above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; grovelling shall they go, till they come to their end and perish. But for Christians, it is theirs to walk in the light, and to lift up their hearts, as looking out for Him who went away, that He might return to them again."

2. "St. Paul says, 'our conversation is in heaven,' or in other words, heaven is our city. We know what it is to be a citizen of this world; it is to have interests, rights, privileges, duties, connexions, in some particu-

lar town or state; to depend upon it, and to be bound to defend it; to be part of it. Now all this the Christian is in repect to heaven. Heaven is his city, earth is not . . . . 'Here,' as the same Apostle says in another place, 'we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.' And therefore he adds to the former of these texts, 'from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' This is the very definition of a Christian, — one who looks for Christ; not who looks for gain, or distinction, or power, or pleasure, or comfort, but who looks 'for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' This, according to the Scripture, is the essential mark, this is the foundation of a Christian, from which everything else follows; whether he is rich or poor, high or low, is a further matter, which may be considered apart; but he surely is a primitive Christian, and he only, who has no aim of this world, who has no wish to be other in this world than he is; whose thoughts and aims have relation to the unseen, the future world; who has lost his taste for this world, sweet and bitter being the same to him; who fulfills the same Apostle's exhortation in another Epistle, 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.'"

3. "St. Peter — who was afterwards the Pope of Rome — began life as a fisherman, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He had his boats, he had his nets; he swept those waters, pursuing his humble trade in company with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and with Andrew, his own elder brother. These men had passed the night upon the bosom of the waters, toiling and laboring, but they had taken nothing. Sad and dispirited for so much time and labor lost, they landed

from their boats in the morning; and they took out their nets to wash them. Whilst they were thus engaged, a great multitude appeared in sight — men who followed the Lord Jesus Christ, and pressed around Him, that they might hear the words of divine truth from His lips. He came to the shores of the lake, and He entered into one of the boats; and the Evangelist takes good care to tell us that the boat into which the Saviour stepped was Simon Peter's boat .... After He had enlightened their (the people's) minds with the treasures of the divine wisdom which flowed from Him, He turned to Peter and said to him: 'Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.' Peter answering said: 'Master, we have labored all night and we have taken nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net.' No sooner does he cast that net into the sea, under the eyes, and at the command of Jesus Christ, than it is instantly filled with fishes, and Peter's boat is filled until it is almost sinking. This is the fact recorded. What does it mean?"

The first two of these examples are given to show how texts, to be adequately paraphrased so that their application may be thoroughly realized, will sometimes need ample extension and even illustration. The last example gives the local setting of a truth whose history is to be traced.

The history of the source and development of a revealed truth must, however, have much more onward movement in it than is found in any of the above extracts. It must, indeed, be rather a spirited historical sketch, than a detailed history, of the doctrine; otherwise it would grow out of all

proportion with the rest of the sermon. It is necessary, therefore, that the paraphrase should be brief and, at the same time, clear and pointed. It is also necessary that leading facts alone should be given; yet those facts must be made instinct with life and energy, for they have a double purpose to serve: to give light to the believer; and to flash conviction on the unbeliever, — this, however, indirectly and by implication.

After the Scripture sources of a doctrine have been given, we next show its working and development in the life of the Church. To do this, we make liberal use of ecclesiastical history, including the writings of the Fathers, the rise and fall of heresies, the enactments of councils, the authorized symbols of faith, and the universal practice of the faithful, as far as it implies or embodies the doctrine we are explaining. This reference to Church history for the elucidation of doctrine, so far from being a novel idea, dates back to early Christian times. It is based on the continuity and apostolicity of faith; and it is singularly adapted to popular discourse, because it is made up chiefly of concrete historical facts.

Passages from the Fathers are quoted appropriately and usefully, when the audience has been instructed thoroughly in the authority due to them and the conditions necessary for placing that authority beyond dispute. But the mention of "the Fathers", as a rule, conveys only a very vague and indefinite idea to the Catholic layman. It is true, this should not be so; but, perhaps, his ignorance is not altogether his fault; — in any case, until it is entirely removed, we should never adduce the testimony of a Father without stating who he was, when he lived, and what is the form of the work from which the testimony is taken — polemical, apologetic, dogmatic, catechetical, homiletic, exegetic, etc.

The official action of the Church assembled in council during the first five centuries supplies stronger and more impressive, as well as more satisfactory, evidence of the antiquity of a doctrine than the writings of any individual Father.

A large body of venerable, saintly bishops, successors of the Apostles, are come together from every country and province of the known world, to bear witness to the tra-

ditional teaching of their respective churches. The Roman Pontiff, as vicar of Christ and head of the universal Church, presides by his delegates. Some error against the ancient faith has been broached, and its author is there at the invitation of the council to defend it. The Holy Ghost is invoked in solemn prayer. The heresiarch is heard, if he choose to speak; and then the votes of the bishops are taken, the error is condemned as heretical, and the Catholic doctrine affected by it is formulated in more explicit and definite terms than before. The voices of men who were, for the most part, utter strangers to one another, who had come from different, and many from the most distant, countries, — of men, too, distinguished for their learning and holiness — the voices of such men concurring without possible collusion in a profession of one and the same faith must bring conviction of its divine origin to all except the wilfully blind and perverse. What is more to our purpose: that concurrence, brought prominently before our people, will give a fuller life — a more stirring energy — to their faith. It will make them realize, as they may have

never done before, the magnificent, world-wide communion, nineteen centuries old, to which they belong, the anxious care with which, during all those centuries, the deposit of divine revelation was guarded, and the sincerity, the earnestness, the learning, the self-sacrifice, and frequently the martyrdom, with which the ecclesia docens guarded it.

It may, perhaps, be objected here that the early councils were but few and those occupied with one doctrine alone — the Incarnation. It is true, that down to the end of the fifth century only four general councils had been held; but we are entitled to refer to national and provincial synods, as well as to those that are ecumenical, because the former, like the latter, bear legitimate witness to the faith then held, and, besides, they had the tacit approbation of the universal Church. Down to the middle of the third century, comparatively few of those particular councils were held on account of the violent persecutions to which Christians were subjected. But afterwards, they were celebrated at brief intervals in one or other part of the Church. Numerous doctrinal and moral errors were condemned in those

councils, that have again cropped up in our day; and surely a preacher, explaining the revealed truths opposed to them, will see and use the decided advantage that history thus gives him of pointing out the consistency and antiquity of the Church's teaching and the unflinching firmness of her attitude against error. *Semper eadem.*

CHAPTER XV.

Application.

Exposition, which we have been treating in the last four chapters, has for its direct and immediate object the enlightenment of the hearer's understanding. But the word of God is infinitely more than intellectual enlightenment; it is a seed, full of life and power, and capable of producing fruit a hundredfold when planted in the soul under favorable circumstances. The first of these circumstances is exposition; the second application, or the presentation of the truth expounded to the individual conscience.

"Does this truth affect me personally? Does it make any demand on me beyond my acceptance of it as a revelation? Can I consistently hold it and continue my present mode of life? If not, what am I bound to do? what obstacles are in the way? what means have I within my reach that will enable me to carry out the obligations it may

impose on me?" — These questions will arise confusedly during the exposition in every earnest conscience, disturbing its peace until they find a satisfactory solution. To give this is the object of Application.

There are, indeed, some speculative truths of revelation the exposition of which usually touch the conscience lightly or not at all. Does this arise through the fault of the preacher, or from the nature of the theme, or because the hearer is not properly disposed? Generally, I think, the preacher is to blame. The object he places before him in preparing his sermon is not some definite spiritual good of his hearer; he sows dead formulas where he should plant living seed; his words may be luminous, but they are devoid of heat, of suggestiveness, of inspiration. They are not the words of those men by whom salvation was brought to Israel. Yet it is not harder to pursue and attain a definite object in a doctrinal than in a moral sermon. Earnestness, a spiritual conception of our subject, and a determination to impress a similar conception on our hearers, — these are requirements of every preacher, and they put

the hearer in such a spiritual frame of mind that a moral application seems to grow as naturally out of a doctrinal theme as fruit grows on a tree.

Example. In a purely doctrinal discourse on the Fitness of the Glories of Mary, Cardinal Newman makes the following application:

"And now, my dear brethren, what is befitting in us, if all that I have been telling you is befitting in Mary? If the Mother of Emmanuel ought to be the first of creatures in sanctity and in beauty; if it became her to be free from all sin from the very first, and from the moment she received her first grace to begin to merit more; and if such as was her beginning, such was her end, her conception immaculate and her death an assumption; if she died, but revived, and is exalted on high; what is befitting in the children of such a Mother, but an imitation, in their measure, of her devotion, her meekness, her simplicity, her modesty, and her sweetness? Her glories are not only for the sake of her Son, they are for our sakes also. . . . . Above all, let us imitate her purity, who, rather than relinquish her

virginity, was willing to lose Him for a Son."

NOTE. Many preachers make no moral application toward the end of a doctrinal sermon. Their whole aim seems to be concentrated in producing a deep spiritual impression of the doctrine. This is their definite object, in which the moral inference is held in solution, to be drawn with the help of divine grace by the hearer himself. There may be some earnest, thoughtful members in every congregation who will do this; nay more, some entire congregations may in rare cases be trusted to do it; but, as a rule, the preacher should himself make the application. It is particularly necessary that he should do so when he speaks to children and young people generally, because they are not likely to work out, perhaps not even capable of working out, practical conclusions by themselves.

The Application usually reveals the definite object of the sermon, telling (1) what is to be done, and (2) how to do it.

1. *What is to be done?* At this point of his sermon the preacher must be above all things practical. He must look with keen vision into the consciences of his hearers, and examine their secret workings; he must discover the obstacles that, consciously or unconsciously, block the line of conduct he points out; and he must not move a single step forward until these are effectually removed. Sometimes, in moral sermons, the

removal of those obstacles by earnest persuasive reasoning ought to be made one of the main divisions, because as long as the will is held in check by some secret motive or passion, the most thrilling, soul-stirring eloquence will have no influence over it. A bar of iron between the wheels stops a machine, no matter what force of steam you apply; a bad habit, a pet theory, or an ingrained prejudice clogs the will somewhat in a similar way.

2. *How to carry out the resolution?* The practical manner of carrying out the resolution which forms the definite object of the sermon is next explained. Here two extremes are to be avoided — vagueness and minuteness; yet it is safer to verge toward the latter than the former. A vague explanation is like a pointless arrow; it strikes but does not penetrate. On the other hand, if a resolution be too minutely developed, it will produce the effect of an anti-climax, suggesting the fable of the Mountain in labor. A distinct office of any virtue may be made the object of a resolution, and the *ordinary* mode of executing that office ought to be fully described; but singular and

perplexing contingencies, in which the obligation of the virtue may be questionable, should not be discussed. What are called "cases of conscience" are altogether out of place in the pulpit.

It is unwise to urge more than one resolution in a sermon. The exposition may, indeed, lead up to several practical conclusions; but if all of them be proposed, the attention of the audience is divided and the more they are, the less intense is the consideration given to each. This is obviously true when the resolutions arise from dissimilar virtues or obligations; but it is equally true, when the practices enjoined belong all to one general principle of conduct. All the observances enjoined by fraternal charity, for instance, should not be urged in one sermon. They should, of course, be enumerated and, it may be, explained, but only one can be effectually enforced.

Every obligation has a positive side — something to be done, and a negative side — something to be omitted. Each of these sides must be carefully explained, as it is the complement of the other. Whether

both may be embodied in one resolution, depends on the nature of the duty. Hearing Mass on Sundays and abstaining from servile works ought to be enforced in distinct sermons; while the prohibition of theft and the positive obligation of restitution may be combined in one.

Young preachers in their excessive zeal sometimes propose the higher grades of the virtues for general practice. They think that what St. Thomas calls the political, or civil, virtues are beneath the standard of ordinary Christian life; hence they endeavor to raise the aspirations of their audience to the higher level of the "purgatorious virtues" (*virtutes purgatoriae*) or even to the still more elevated plane where the "virtues of the mind purified" are practised. These higher stages of the spiritual life are reached by very few in a congregation. It is, therefore, useless and perhaps imprudent (in sermons) to urge people to a course which they are not inclined to follow, which they are not bound to follow, and which, bound or not, they are sure not to follow. It is much more practical to propose and urge the ordinary exercise of the theological

and cardinal virtues — I mean such exercise of them as may be reasonably expected from one who takes a serious interest in what pertains to his salvation, but who, notwithstanding, is not easily moved from settled personal and social habits. The virtues practised in this way are called by St. Thomas political, or civil, not to distinguish them from Christian virtues, but to denote that they are required in every good citizen (*politicus*, or *civis*). Indeed, commentators of St. Thomas require for the exercise of the "political virtues" a degree of perfection which the bulk of our people rarely attain.

Every one knows that a moral resolution cannot be practised in a meritorious manner without grace, and that grace can be obtained regularly only by certain religious acts, chiefly prayer and the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Hence these means must be made as familiar to our people as the clothes they wear or the food they eat. The nature and use and power of prayer must, indeed, be so brought home to them, that it will be a first principle of life and conduct, a practical guiding axiom,

a habit, an instinct, a reality as unquestionable as the air they breathe or the ground they walk on. When a priest has once achieved this result, he need have little anxiety about the efficiency of his exhortation. The habit of prayer makes the springs of emotion and action so sensitive in the soul, that they respond to the simplest words of admonition. No matter how deeply an audience be impressed by a sermon, the impression will soon wear off unless it be guarded by prayer. When Massillon preached at St. Eustache that famous sermon of his on the Fewness of the Elect, and made the entire audience spring to their feet, "as if looking for the archangel to sound his trumpet," the terror created was no doubt salutary, but was it operative? did it lead to conversion of heart? Infidelity, whether masked or barefaced, does not pray; so Massillon's eloquence did not stay the progress of French corruption or delay the advent of the French Revolution.

Prayer for grace to keep a resolution can scarcely be sincere or even serious, if he who asks for help does nothing to help himself. "Qui nos creavit," says St. Augustine,

"sine nobis, non nos justificat sine nobis; creavit nescientem, justificat volentem." (De Verb. Apost. serm. 15, C. ii.) This elementary truth, familiar as it is to us all, is not studied as it ought to be in its far-reaching applications. There are especially two deductions from it which are intimately connected with the practical result of a sermon. These are: first, the necessity of avoiding or putting away from us everything that would lead us to break our resolution; and, secondly, the necessity of cultivating, developing and strengthening the will in its natural operations, so that its co-operation with grace may be more assured and uniform. The first of these obligations has to be explained frequently to the people, as a necessary means of keeping the resolution we propose, particularly when that resolution has for its object the avoidance of certain vicious practices. The second may appear strange and perhaps irrelevant to many; but I am convinced that, if it were explained and enforced more generally than it is, there would be less backsliding from good intentions and resolutions. A few words about each will be of service to the young preacher.

a) The obligation of avoiding the occasions of sin. This obligation must be explained and urged when we speak of vicious practices, that is, of sinful actions to which we are inclined by nature or habit or surroundings. The prohibition of anything unlawful always includes the prohibition of whatever would naturally and usually lead to it. The Sixth Commandment, for instance, forbids not only adultery and fornication, but all thoughts and words as well as actions that would vehemently incite the will to them.

Occasions of sin are external objects or circumstances calculated to draw the soul into temptation. If the temptation arising from the object or circumstance be yielded to generally (or, according to some, even frequently), the occasion is called proximate; otherwise, it is called remote. The proximate occasion is voluntary, if it can be easily avoided; necessary, if it cannot be avoided without serious inconvenience. The former must be always put away under pain of sin; the latter not so, because the person exposed to such occasion may make it remote by prayer and the Sacra-

ments, cooperating with prudent vigilance and a resolute will.

Hence, preachers are not justified in telling their people that every proximate occasion of sin is to be avoided or put away: first, because such a statement, without distinction or qualification, is not true; and secondly, because it is calculated to form a false conscience and lead to formal sin. Yet, there is much danger of self-deception when we come to determine whether or not any particular inconvenience makes an occasion of sin necessary. He who is exposed to it cannot decide the question for himself, and it cannot be decided for him in the pulpit; hence, the only course to recommend is to consult his pastor or confessor and abide by his judgment.

Sins of appetite form an important part of the subject-matter of preaching. Now, we know from experience that we are most violently tempted to those sins when some external object suggests the animal pleasure of committing them. We are obliged, therefore, when the danger of yielding is imminent and voluntary, to shun such object or put it away from us; and, indeed, when

we can do so without serious inconvenience, no spiritual remedies will avail us as long as we remain in contact with it. I am profoundly convinced, then, that no resolution against carnal vices will be of any permanent use, unless it be backed up with another resolution against the proximate occasions of breaking it. These details are intimately connected with the attainment of the definite object of a sermon; and a zealous priest will not neglect them on account of the little oratorical display possible in giving them.

b) The necessity of cultivating natural will-power. The Catholic doctrine of grace in relation to the human will is not always properly understood by the faithful; and the misunderstanding of it sometimes prevents good resolutions from being kept, particularly under stress of violent temptation. There are people who expect grace to do every thing for them, even to supply the essential will-element of a supernatural human act. Hence, when strongly tempted, say to break a resolution they have made, they make little effort to resist — to exercise their free will in combination with the di-

vine help they expect — but they throw all the burden and responsibility of overcoming the temptation on God. The same error manifests itself in another way. *Strengthening* grace is not always needed for good works toward which from habit or temperament we feel a natural or acquired inclination. Yet those people have the habit of relying on supernatural help to perform the simplest, easiest moral actions as well as to overcome every slight temptation that may occur to them. In truth, they seem to hold that the human will without divine help is capable of nothing but sin. They make the work of grace, contrary to Catholic teaching, an operation, not a cooperation with a living, acting agent (the will); and the consequence is, that when they find grace not to do for them what they erroneously expect of it, their faith in prayer and the Sacraments is weakened and they are often grievously tempted to give up religious observances altogether.

Whilst we teach, then, the necessity of illuminating and inspiring grace for every salutary and supernatural act we do, we should at the same time teach the necessity

of exercising the will as an essential condition of the action of concomitant grace.

But there is another prevalent error regarding the will to which I would call attention here. Not only within, but outside, the sphere of supernatural actions, man has the power to choose between opposite or diverse courses. Some choose from the impulse of the moment; some, from feeling or passion, against their better judgment. They think there is no harm in doing so, as there is no question of sin; but they do not consider that they lessen their available will-power to cooperate with grace in resisting temptation, by the habit they indulge of acting against, or without, the guidance of reason. And yet, when tempted, they expect divine help to supply the weakness of will caused by that habit and persevered in without any thought of correction.

Another form of this error is habitual excess in the venial indulgence of the appetites. Experience shows that mortal sin is the ordinary result of such excess, not, I am convinced, from the want of grace, but from the false presumption that grace will do for us what we are unwilling to do for

ourselves — give us back in the hour of need the will-power which we deliberately throw away.

A zealous preacher will realize the importance of guarding his audience against these two obstacles to the efficient enforcement of the definite object of his sermon. He will use all possible energy in cautioning them against voluntary proximate occasions of sin, and in teaching them that it is only the will in action, that is, struggling with all its might against temptation, which is efficaciously helped by grace to victory.

CHAPTER XVI.

Persuasion.

There is a fundamental truth contained in the saying: "That only which we love, we know." Knowledge, then, of a divine truth is not perfect unless we love it and seek to incorporate it in our lives. Hence, Exposition in its broadest sense includes not only the fullest intellectual knowledge of what we preach about, but also the motives for making that knowledge practical and operative. Persuasion is the art of choosing those motives wisely and using them effectively. It is easy to move the will onwards or downwards in the direction of its natural inclinations. But to move it upwards to the supernatural is beyond all human faculty or art, — this can be done by grace alone. However, as our divine Lord has ordained that by preaching the world is to be brought into the Church, we

must believe that He intended by the ministry of preaching to convey those actual graces to men which would lead to their sanctification and salvation. He did not make it a channel of habitual or sanctifying grace, and hence it is not a Sacrament; but it is a Sacramental, in as much as it effectively symbolizes the actual supernatural helps which are conferred through it on the well-disposed.

Now, it is a well-known principle in theology that if the symbolic action instituted by Christ to give grace be not performed — if any substantial part of it be omitted — the grace is not given. We may reasonably infer, then, that there is at least great danger of our sermons bearing no spiritual fruit, if they be wanting in the essential element of persuasion. They seem to be no more the divinely appointed channels of actual graces to our hearers, than wine used in Baptism would be the divinely appointed channel of spiritual regeneration.

The object of Persuasion (in preaching) is the absolute determination of the will to do something conducive to salvation. To excite a merely sentimental yearning to pos-

sess some virtue or get rid of some vice is not enough; because such yearning implies conscious or unconscious tampering with grace — unwillingness to do what God requires of us. Most of the barrenness of preaching comes from our not keeping definitely and prominently before us this object of Persuasion. We are satisfied if we expound divine truth in simple popular language, and we are elated if we succeed in moving our audience to tears; yet neither exposition nor tear-shedding is the end of a sermon.

Persuasion requires certain qualities in a preacher, without which his most impassioned words will not produce their full effect on an audience. First of all, he must have a character for trustworthiness as a spiritual guide to his people. He must, therefore, be sincere and earnest, and his life must be consistent with his teaching. It may be thought that no priest having the care of souls could be found deficient in trustworthiness. It is true, indeed, that as far as regards the celebration of Mass and the administration of the Sacraments every priest in good standing is trusted. It is

true also that no one denies such a one the negative goodness of respectability and moral cleanliness of life. But something more than this is required when he would persuade his people from the pulpit to a true conversion of heart, — a conversion implying the sacrifice of many cherished inclinations. There must be positive goodness — faith, earnestness, zeal, piety, charity to the poor — in a word, he must live up to what he teaches. Men of the world apply their business principles to the affair of their salvation. If some one advise them to invest their money in a certain concern, they naturally inquire how much he himself has invested in it; and if they find that he has all his money invested elsewhere, they feel a reasonable distrust in his sincerity, and his advice goes for nought.

Note. Professor Mahaffy in his Essay on the Decay of Modern Preaching holds that a preacher, merely as such, and considered just as he is in his pulpit, need not be a good man. "It is not necessary," he writes, "that he should possess personal piety, or presuppose it in himself. He may give great expositions of dogma; he may give splendid exhortations to a holy life; and, provided he be really in earnest, — provided his enthusiasm be not fictitious, or his earnestness assumed, — he may be a great champion of his faith. For he

may feel all the value of goodness, he may sincerely believe in the truth and value of his creed, and yet he may not have attained that inner calm of the soul, that closer walk with God, which is the privilege of the very few among men."

It may be readily granted that any preacher endowed with dramatic talent can give eloquent expression to truths and sentiments which have no influence on his own life. But his eloquence will have no practical effect on his hearers unless they either presume or know him to be a good man in whose private life the truths he teaches are embodied. Hence a resident pastor, no matter how eloquent, is sadly deceived if he expects his people to abstract from his private character when he stands in his pulpit and announces the law to them.

There can be no persuasion without unction. This is defined to be, "that fervor and tenderness of address which excites piety and devotion." It is a quality communicated to preaching by the whole-souled earnestness and zeal of the preacher. It cannot be counterfeited, nor can it be acquired by art; indeed, it can scarcely be analyzed, for, although it is conveyed through language and delivery, yet these

cannot produce it, as, even at their best, they often leave the heart cold and unmoved. Perhaps it is best described in its effect by the two disciples going to Emmaus, who, after our divine Lord had expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him and had vanished out of their sight, said one to the other: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?"

It is unction chiefly that makes the exposition of doctrine and moral duty interesting and palatable to an audience. Earnestness begets earnestness; words springing from a heart on fire burn their way even to hearts of ice. *Cor ad cor loquitur.*

There is but one way for a preacher to acquire unction, and that is to be honest with himself and his people, to mean every word he says to them, to prescribe no rule for them with which he does not regulate his own conduct.

Note. Few things in preaching are so contemptible as simulated unction. I am inclined to think that it has contributed more than any other cause to estrange men from religion. Only women and children are affected by it. Manliness never speaks in whining tones,

nor does it "assume a sickly smile while expressing an artificial love of God or of our erring brethren."

Another condition of Persuasion is, that we win and hold the goodwill of our audience. We must, indeed, announce to them frequently mysterious or unpalatable truths without mincing or minimizing; but in doing so we must be careful not to arouse the antagonism of prejudice or ignorance. On the contrary, we must use tact and delicacy and gentleness in leading up to the truths by copious comparisons and illustrations, and by showing their reasonableness as well as the necessity and advantages of accepting them.

This condition requires us also to please the eye and the ear of our audience. The personal appearance of a preacher has an important bearing on the success of his efforts to persuade. So, too, a harsh voice, a false pitch, defective modulation, ungraceful gestures — everything, in a word, contrary to taste and propriety will tell against him and lessen the effect of his pleading.

To move the will from a state of apathy or antagonism to a state of activity in a particular direction, certain influences must be

brought to bear on it. Those influences are called motives; and they act on the will in two ways, directly and indirectly. They act directly, when they bring before the rational will those properties or relations of an object or truth that make it appear good, beautiful, useful, or attractive, or else, bad, ugly, hurtful, or repulsive. They act indirectly, when they excite the feelings, or passions, and thereby influence the will. These two forms of Persuasion were recognized by Greek rhetoricians who gave to the former the name ἠθῆ, to the latter, παθῆ, Both are thus described by Cicero (Or. 37): *Duo sunt quae bene tractata ab oratore, admirabilem eloquentiam faciant; quorum alterum est, quod Graeci ethikon vocant, ad naturas et ad mores, et ad omnem vitae consuetudinem accommodatum; alterum, quod iidem pathetikon nominant, quo perturbantur animi, et concitantur, in quo uno regnat oratio. Illud superius come, jucundum, ad benevolentiam conciliandam paratum; hoc vehemens, incensum, incitatum, quo causae eripiuntur; quod cum rapide fertur, sustineri nullo pacto potest.*

These two forms of Persuasion may be called the rational and the emotional. The

latter rouses, inspires, elevates; but its effect is transitory; the former reasons earnestly, but without show of passion or excitement, about the practical course which the will should adopt in regard to the definite object of the sermon. Its strength is in the calmness and persuasive reasonableness of its pleading. Its attitude is that of a trusted friend, not of a dictator or of a self-interested advocate. Its influence, therefore, generally tells on the will, while the influence of emotional appeal very often subsides and evaporates

Some preachers are drawn by the natural constitution of their minds to one of these forms of Persuasion, others to the other. The ideal preacher, however, will combine both forms in his sermons, at the same time giving the preponderance to that form toward which lies his peculiar bent.

Note. Rational appeal, as it becomes more and more earnest, grows naturally into the emotional form, somewhat as an act of divine love from being a purely spiritual conception may from its intensity and energy overflow into the feelings and senses, even filling the eyes with tears. — No preacher will be so unwise as to make his sermon to consist wholly of emotional appeals. Yet there are occasions when a short impassioned address, known in Italy as a *feverino*, may be

made with much spiritual profit. The morning of a First Communion, the Forty Hours' Adoration, Good Friday, Corpus Christi, are instances of such occasions.

Persuasion moves the will in one or the other of two opposite directions, either toward an object or truth as good, agreeable, desirable, or away from it as bad, unpleasant, hurtful. These two movements are produced by two mutually opposite classes of motives: those of attraction and those of repulsion. The former include love, joy, happiness, peace of mind, self-interest, duty, hope, desire, beauty and attractiveness, good will and esteem of others, good example, courage, gratitude, pity. The latter are the antonyms of these — hatred, misery, sorrow, remorse, etc.

It is not the number of motives as much as the earnestness with which they are urged that tells in a sermon. Moreover, no motive should be used that is not naturally and obviously suggested in the exposition of our theme. Even among these there should be one primary, dominant motive more insisted on and developed than the rest, as that which will have most influence on the hearer. When the subject of a

sermon is some virtue, motives of attraction should be chiefly used; on the other hand, motives of repulsion are the most appropriate and telling, when we would turn the will from vice or sin. Still it is often advisable if not necessary to contrast a virtue with the opposite vice; in which case the corresponding motives in the two classes should be urged.

EXAMPLE. "O my friends, what a blessing it is for the grown man in after life, to be able to look back to the days of his early boyhood and say of the old man:"— his father —" that is in his grave: 'I never heard a bad word from him. I never saw him in a position unworthy of a man. I never heard from his lips, nor saw in his life, anything that could teach me sin or vice. His example, by which my character was formed, was as that of a saint of God — a perfect Christian.' This is the highest blessing, perhaps, God can give to a man; and this is the precious blessing that the drunkard denies to the children that God gave him in this world. How do they grow up? They see their mother pining away in 'unwomanly rags'; they see her lack-lustre

eye; they see the evidence of gloomy despair upon her wan, emaciated face."

Father Burke.

Exhorting an audience to act on some motive, is not persuasion. They know as well as the preacher that they should be influenced by that motive; but knowledge by itself is of little account where there is question of determining the will to some definite act. To be effective, the motive must be embodied in some comparison, example, parable, or experience. To say, for instance: "Give up sin; turn your hearts to God; go to Confession; begin a new life" — all this has little if any persuasive force in it. So, too, appeals that have become stock pulpit expressions, unless they are recast, will scarcely move an audience to a change of life.

We should never express our intention to persuade, as by doing so we are in danger of putting our hearers into an attitude of resistance. Consciously or unconsciously, men are jealous of any direct interference with their free will; and they stand on their guard against anyone who proposes formally to regulate or influence their future conduct.

Hence, in the body of a sermon, the more covertly and indirectly motives are urged, the more effectively they will do their work. Still direct appeals are sometimes not only allowable but necessary. They have more effect on uncultured than on cultured hearers, and they are always in place toward the end of a sermon.

When comparison, example, etc., are used for the purpose of persuasion a bare outline is not sufficient, but copious details should be given. "In a description of anything," writes Whately, "that is likely to act on the feelings, this effect will by no means be produced as soon as the understanding is sufficiently informed; detail and expansion are here not only admissible, but absolutely necessary, in order that the mind may have leisure and opportunity to form vivid and distinct ideas. For, as Quintilian well observes, he who tells us that a city was sacked, although that one word implies all that occurred, will produce little if any impression on the feelings, in comparison of one who sets before us a living description of the various lamentable circumstances; to tell the whole, he adds, is by no means the same as to tell everything."

In emotional appeal, there are two methods by which the preacher may rouse the feelings of his audience. The first is to give the fullest possible expression, by language and delivery, to the feeling we would excite; the second, to let our words, spoken calmly, with suppressed emotion, act on the audience, without any aid from impassioned elocution or delivery.

Whately calls these the exaggerating and the extenuating methods, — names which, for want of better, may be retained. It is safe to say, that the method of exaggeration should be scarcely ever used in preaching except as the culmination of the method of extenuation. A transition from calm passionless exposition or reasoning to the former method of appeal is too violent to be effective. In truth, although such appeal is popularly considered the most brilliant effect of oratory, true eloquence frequently dispenses with it as hurtful rather than helpful to its end, namely, effective persuasion.

The method of extenuation, therefore, is that best suited to preaching, as it is the most accordant with the mildness of the

Gospel, and also perhaps with the dignity of the pulpit. It works through description or narrative, adding detail to detail, until the feelings of the audience are wrought to a high pitch of excitement. Frequently the suppressed passion of the preacher will at this point throw off the self-imposed restraint, and convey to his audience the magnetism of his own excitement. The eye will flash or swim in tears; the voice will ring high and clear, or speak in tremulous, broken accents; the blanched cheek, the twitching lips, the clenched hands, the swaying body — all will speak passion and enkindle it. Such impassioned outburst should be, as I have said, the result or climax of pent-up feeling struggling for expression; — it should neither be nor appear to be strained or factitious. The preacher, too, should be sure that he has carried his hearers with him, and that they glow with the fire that burns in his impassioned language and delivery,

Examples. 1. "Is there a man among you who has the hardihood to blaspheme the eternal and almighty God, by saying that that speechless, senseless, unreasoning,

unloving, lifeless brute there is the image of God? Stand over him, my friends, and look at him as he lies there. Speak to him. You might as well speak to a corpse. He does not understand you. Reason with him. You might as well reason with that table. Ask him to look at you. There is no light in his eyes . . . . Let his wife come there and kneel at his side; he does not know her; he is unable to speak to her . . . May I ask you, is he a man? Why, if he were a man, he could speak, he could reason with you, he could see you and know you if you were there. How can you call this creature a man? He has lost the power of speech, of discerning, of reasoning, of loving, of moving. No, my friends, he is only the remains of a man; with this difference between him and a corpse: a corpse is killed by the angel of God commissioned to do God's sentence; but this man has killed himself, by calling in the devil to help him in his infamous suicide."

Father Burke.

2. "O what a moment for the poor soul, when it comes to itself, and finds itself suddenly before the judgment seat of Christ!

O what a moment, when breathless with the journey, and dizzy with the brightness, and overwhelmed with the strangeness of what is happening to him, and unable to realize where he is, the sinner hears the voice of the accusing spirit, bringing up all the sins of his past life, which he has forgotten, or which he has explained away, which he would not allow to be sins, though he suspected they were; when he hears him detailing all the mercies of God which he has despised, all His warnings which he has set at nought, all His judgments which he has outlived; when that evil one follows out into detail the growth and progress of a lost soul, — how it expanded and was confirmed in sin, — how it budded forth into leaves and flowers, grew into branches, and ripened into fruit, — till nothing was wanting for its full condemnation. And, O still more terrible, still more distracting, when the Judge speaks, and consigns it to the jailors, till it shall pay the endless debt which lies against it. 'Impossible! I a lost soul! I separated from hope and from peace for ever! It is not I of whom the Judge so spake. There is a mistake some-

where; Christ, Saviour, hold Thy hand, — one minute to explain it.' . . . . O mighty God, O God of love, it is too much; it broke the heart of Thy sweet Son Jesus to see the misery of man spread out before His eyes. He died by it as well as for it. And we, too, in our measure, our eyes ache, and our hearts sicken, and our heads reel, when we but feebly contemplate it. O most tender heart of Jesus, why wilt Thou not end, when wilt Thou end this ever-growing load of sin and woe?" Newman.

The ultimate aim of Persuasion should always be the definite object; but its immediate and direct aim, especially in the expository part of the sermon, is frequently the removal of prejudices or the conciliation of the will to some principle of which the definite object is a particular application.

It is sometimes asked, in what part of a sermon may persuasion be most fittingly introduced. Some answer, at the end of each point, or division, and especially in the conclusion. These, no doubt, are the places in which formal, explicit appeals to the feelings are made with most propriety and effect; but it would be a grave mistake to ex-

clude the persuasive element from any part of a sermon. From the introduction to the conclusion, we must endeavor to gain and hold the goodwill of the audience, to inspire them with confidence in our guidance, to satisfy them that loyal, full-hearted acceptance of our teaching is intimately connected with the highest and dearest interests of their lives. These are offices of persuasion quite as much as the direct appeals to the feelings and the will to which it is frequently confined.

CHAPTER XVII.

Conclusion.

When the theme, or proposition, of a sermon has been fully expounded by definition, illustration, and historical development, and when furthermore the definite object has been (presumably) attained by persuasive reasoning and direct appeal to the feelings and the will, — when all this has been satisfactorily accomplished, nothing more remains to be done except to bring the sermon to a fitting conclusion.

For a doctrinal sermon, this conclusion consists simply of a recapitulation of what has been said and an animated but not impassioned application of it for the guidance of conduct. It scarcely admits of being sharply pointed to moral details; but it can and should implant suggestive, stimulating, inspiring thought in the mind and heart, — thought which in Heaven's good time will bear fruit in the conversion of the sinner and the greater sanctification of the just.

The conclusion of a moral sermon has to be more elaborate. Its purpose is to make a final appeal to the will on behalf of the definite object; which appeal must be the climax of the sermon, exceeding all previous appeals in its impassionateness and persuasive power. *Hic, si usquam*, Cicero observes, *totos eloquentiae fontes aperire licet.*

The effective work of the sermon is generally done before we reach the conclusion. The will of the hearer, under the influence of grace, has already determined to yield itself to our guidance, — to break off that bad habit, to practise that virtue, to use that means of salvation. What, then, is the use of the conclusion? Simply to strengthen, deepen, and make permanent the good resolution formed by the hearer. In photography, there is a process known as "the fixing of the picture," without which the first exposure of the impression to sunlight would utterly destroy the image. Now, in an analogous way, the conclusion "fixes" the resolution in the mind of the hearer and safeguards it agains effacement.

It sometimes happens, however, that one who has remained unmoved through the

body of the sermon yields at length to the appeal made in the conclusion. To help such a one out of his wavering between sin and grace, we should keep on pleading with the audience to the end as if they still held out against us. Every word of ours will tell with equal force on those already persuaded and those we have still to persuade. It will confirm the former in their good resolution, and it will do all that human agency can, to make the latter, even at the last moment, compliant to the promptings of grace. However true it is, then, that the actual work of persuasion is generally done before we reach the conclusion, we should still plead with the same earnestness as if we knew that we had yet accomplished nothing.

From what I have said it will be seen that the conclusion consists essentially in a final, most earnest appeal to the feelings and the will of the audience in behalf of the definite object of the sermon. This appeal ordinarily contains four elements; namely, recapitulation, practical resolution (definite object), enforcement by motives, and prayer.

Note. It is not advisable to make a formal announcement of the conclusion. The complete and

satisfactory exposition and application of the theme should indicate sufficiently that the final stage is reached, and no preacher should put further strain on the attention of his audience. Yet, however covertly made, the easy natural transition from the body of a sermon to the conclusion requires care and skill, so as not to suggest distracting trains of thought.

1. Recapitulation. This is an abstract of the development of the proposition. In most discourses it is absolutely necessary, as it gives a clear, comprehensive view of the entire subject, impresses it on the memory, and serves as a foundation for the crowning appeal to be made in the conclusion.

NOTE. Professor Phelps, in his Theory of Preaching, says: "Not all discussions admit of recapitulation. The salient points of a discussion may be so simple and so few, that to recapitulate them would burden them with needless form. Recapitulate a hortatory sermon, and you reduce it to burlesque." I am not at all convinced of the truth of this remark, regarding hortatory sermons. These consist mainly of several motives used to persuade to some moral purpose; and I fail to see what "burlesque" there is in summing up all those motives in the conclusion, and thereby bringing their united pressure to bear on the will. *Si per singula minus moverat, turba valet.* (Quintilian.)

Brevity is the chief characteristic of recapitulation. Nothing cools interest in a speaker's words more effectually than the

thought that he is about to give in substance the whole sermon over again. A few pithy, well chosen words are enough to give the main ideas of the discourse, and these may be conveyed in such a way that the audience will not perceive their object. Of course, illustrations and texts would be here out of place. Toward the end of a sermon, the *movement* should be rapid; hence, it is sufficient, after repeating the proposition, to recapitulate the divisions and the motives adduced for the attainment of the definite object.

Example. In his Discourse on the Fitness of the Glories of Mary, Cardinal Newman recapitulates indirectly but very effectively as follows: "And now, my dear brethren, what is befitting in us, if all that I have been telling you is fitting in Mary? If the Mother of Emmanuel ought to be the first of creatures in sanctity and beauty; if it became her to be free from all sin from the very first, and from the moment she received her first grace to begin to merit more; and if such as was her beginning, such was her end, her conception immaculate and her death an assumption;

if she died, but revived, and is exalted on high; what is befitting in the children of such a Mother, but an imitation, in their measure, of her devotion, her meekness, her simplicity, her modesty, her sweetness?"

2. The practical resolution, or definite object. This should be a direct and evident inference from the recapitulation. Far-fetched deductions, no matter how practical, will have little effect, because the audience will not see the connection between them and the body of the sermon. Should there be any difficulties in carrying out the resolution, the means of removing them ought to have been given in the body of the sermon; as it is altogether too late to treat of them in the conclusion.

As I have said more than once, we must guard against all appearance of dictation in urging the practical resolution of the sermon. The will revolts against coercion; and it is so jealous of its freedom, that it often hardens itself to persuasion because it suspects that this, its sovereign prerogative, is tampered with or endangered. One mode of avoiding such suspicion is to propose the

resolution in the first person — for ourselves as well as for the people. If we are to be a pattern of the flock from the heart, we should honestly practise every virtue and shun every vice about which we speak from the pulpit; and there is no shame, but great edification, in admitting that we priests offend in many things. Let us then put ourselves with our people before the throne of divine Mercy, supplicating pardon for the past and resolving on amendment for the future.

St. Alphonsus gives an excellent method of proposing the resolution; namely, by embodying it in an act of contrition. The preacher repeats the words of the act with all the earnestness and fervor he can command; he gives the chief motives for sorrow, — fear, ingratitude, love; and in the purpose of amendment, he dwells with special stress on the resolution of the sermon, giving in a few words the means of keeping it faithfully. If he feels that he has carried the audience with him, and that their hearts are already glowing with the ardent words he has just spoken, it is best, as the saying has it, to "let well enough alone," and to finish with a prayer.

3. Enforcement of resolution by motives. It will frequently happen that the audience will have to be roused to an emotional state by strong practical motives, before they are prepared to follow the preacher in making the act of contrition just mentioned. In this case the resolution is proposed after the recapitulation — not uncommonly in the interrogative form; and then the motives for accepting it are urged in a series ascending to a climax, until the intent look, the hushed silence, — perhaps the sobs and tears, — of the crowd before us give evidence of their being deeply moved by our words and prepared to adopt the resolution we have presented. Then moved ourselves as much as those we address, we implore the Father of mercies through the Blood of His Son to pardon us for the past, to accept our heart-felt sorrow for it, and to strengthen us to keep the resolution that we now make. (Here, it will be observed, the act of contrition and the final prayer are united.)

Note. The means of practising the resolution should not be mixed up with the motives given in the conclusion. Young preachers are apt to ignore this caution and to make the end of their sermon

consist of a stale, wearisome eulogy on prayer, the Sacraments, flight of occasions, etc., as the only safeguard of virtue, the only antidote of vice. True and practical as such words are, they have no freshness to please the imagination, no point to touch the heart.

We have seen that persuasive reasoning, examples, comparisons, and other forms of illustration are the ordinary means by which, in the body of a sermon, motives are brought to bear on the will. Such means would not be in keeping with the purely emotional character, nor indeed with the requisite brevity, of the conclusion. Hence instead of them, the preacher, glowing with the vivid conception of his theme, breaks forth into the language of all genuine passion, — entreaty, exclamation, apostrophe, — a language above all the rules of art, which only the inspiration of the moment can suggest.

Although an apostolic man, in this last fervid appeal, will be restrained by no bashfulness, no fear of excess, no anticipation of censure or ridicule, yet he will regulate his strongest expressions by the demands of propriety and taste. He will especially keep in mind the character of

his audience, the nature of his theme, and the compass of his own power of impassioned expression.

a) If the audience remains cold and silent through the sermon, notwithstanding the appeals made to them, any impassioned address to their feelings in the conclusion would be as ineffectual as hammering cold iron. A few earnest words of persuasive reasoning may possibly touch them; — when these have been spoken, the hearer must be left to the working of divine grace. Another kind of irresponsive audience is that made up of so-called refined people who affect to be pained by any outspoken expression of strong feeling in the pulpit. They patronize it in music and the drama, but they pronounce it "bad form" in preaching. I confess I should have little sympathy with those people, if I were not forced to admit that we priests too often give them reason to complain of our exaggerated, unartistic expressions of strong and deep emotions. We are not altogether to blame for this; for, having the poor always with us, who are moved more by sensible impressions

than by reasoning, we need to be somewhat melodramatic to be effective. But on the principle of becoming "all to all, in order to gain all," we certainly should know how to adapt our elocution and delivery to any audience we have to address, so that our ministry be not reviled. We have a mission to the cultured as well as to the uncultured; and to both we must preach as men having power; both must regard us as their superiors, if our preaching is to bear fruit among them.

A thoughtful Protestant writer (Professor Mahaffy) confesses that among the better classes, and with educated congregations, he thinks the day of preaching is gone by. His words are full of suggestion for us, although used with direct reference to the Protestant church of Ireland. "Taking first the educated classes," he writes, "a very large body nowadays, and often reaching down to the artisan or servant, who reads his newspaper and hears the conversation of enlightened people, — there is no longer a difference of intellectual level between the preacher and his audience. He is no longer standing forth, if not an in-

spired, at least an authorised and authoritative teacher, who knows vastly more, and can speak vastly better, than those who hear him. Nor is he their only instructor, upon whose guidance they must depend for all their spiritual sustenance. They can read other opinions; they can search the Scriptures, even in the original . . . . . If a second Paul were to stand forth to this people, even though they had the discretion or the good taste not to mock, they would say to him calmly, *We will hear thee again of this matter.* To such people, preaching — at least regular, every-Sunday preaching — is wellnigh useless, and for all practical purposes an anachronism."

Are we losing our hold on any class of our people, because our preaching, and especially our appeals to the feelings, are too often below the level of school oratorical exercises?

b) The nature of our theme should regulate the kind of motives to be used, and the manner of presenting them, in the conclusion. Death, judgment, Hell, Impurity, Drunkenness, and the grosser vices generally demand appeals to our sensitive nature,

through fear and terror, shame, self-contempt, remorse; and these appeals must be made with all the energy and vehemence of which we are capable. Most themes, however, developed in the Christian pulpit should be enforced by motives that appeal to our higher nature — hope, desire, gratitude, love, etc. The Testament of mercy and love under which we live justifies us in preaching unbounded hope of salvation for all mankind; and the example of our divine Saviour teaches us to win souls by love — not to coerce them by fear. Hence we should be untrue to our mission, were we to make the terrors of judgment the keynote of our message to the world. Nevertheless, eternal punishment for unrepented sin is a terrible reality that must not be put out of sight, because belief in it is a powerful help to higher motives, and for some persons is the most effectual means of overcoming violent carnal temptations.

c) Some preachers are incapable of those impassioned outbursts up to which the development of many themes naturally leads. Either they feel no passion themselves; or they cannot express what they

feel in adequate words; or their voices have not the required compass or pliancy; or, finally, self-consciousness quenches whatever fire might otherwise animate their language and delivery. No matter what the cause of such inability, whether removable or not, it is safe to say, that any expression of feeling so crude and amateurish as to violate good taste and to excite ridicule in any part of the audience, should never be attempted. Better infinitely tell a plain unvarnished tale, than tear a passion to tatters.

Yet, in a normal sermon, what I have already said holds good — that a preacher should ordinarily make a direct appeal to the feelings toward the end of his discourse. The principal means to be used in this appeal are: entreaty, reproach, interrogation, exclamation, and apostrophe. A few words about each of these.

1. Entreaty is a stock form of bringing a sermon to a conclusion. Few preachers can be found who ever omit the time-worn formula, "Let me now exhort you in conclusion" or its equivalent. And yet I do not see any useful purpose it serves.

It contains neither argument nor motive, and therefore neither convinces nor persuades. It draws attention to the approaching end of the sermon, and thereby distracts the audience at a point where distraction is most hurtful to the fruit for which we have been laboring. Notwithstanding these objections, entreaty and exhortation are very much favored by Scripture usage, especially in the Epistles of St. Paul. No doubt, we also could entreat and exhort with advantage, if we had the moral weight of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

2. Reproach is a strong motive to right living when conveyed in a kind fatherly manner; but when it is accompanied with sarcasm, irony, ridicule, or bitterness in any form, it drives the hearer to protest and exculpation, and not unfrequently hardens him in his sin. Reproach is closely allied to scolding; and to this latter, no one takes kindly. Dissatisfaction with one's self is the strongest feeling that reproach should produce; and this feeling should be always accompanied with hope, desire, courage, resolution to rise to the higher life of grace.

3. Exclamation "is the expression of a

thought, just as it is strongly felt, not by a logical affirmation, but by some abrupt, inverted, or elliptical construction." (Genung.) This is the usual form of direct appeal to the feelings. Its power lies in its earnestness and extends to every passion of the soul.

Example. "Oh, the misery for us, as many of us as shall be in that number! Oh, the awful thought for all eternity! Oh, the remorseful sting, 'I was called, I might have answered, and I did not!' And oh, the blessedness, if we can look back on the time of trial, when friends implored and enemies scoffed, and say, — The misery for me, which would have been, had I not followed on, had I hung back, when Christ called!" Newman.

4. Interrogation is frequently used, not to elicit an answer, but to emphasise a statement or to add force to the presentment of a motive. When thus used it becomes a figure of speech, and when repeated in a series mounting to a climax, it exercises almost overwhelming persuasive power on an audience. It has this advantage over Exclamation, that it appeals to the personal

judgment and feeling of the audience, thereby conciliating their favor and, to some extent, disarming criticism. Moreover, it is as available for exposition as for persuasion, being a favorite mode with public speakers of urging an argument.

EXAMPLE. "When at length, death gnaws at your bones, and knocks at your heart, when staggering and worn out, your courage wasted, your hope gone, your purity, and, long ago, your peace — will he who first enticed your steps serve your extremity with one office of kindness? Will he stay your head, cheer your dying agony with one word of hope, or light the way for your coward steps to the grave, or weep when you are gone, or send one pitiful scrap to your desolate family? What reveler wears crape for a dead drunkard? What gang of gamblers ever intermitted a game for the death of a companion? What harlot weeps for a harlot? What debauchee mourns for a debauchee? They would carouse at your funeral, — gamble at your funeral. If one flush more of pleasure were to be had by it, they would drink shame and ridicule to your memory out of your own skull, and

roar in bacchanal revelry over your damnation! Oh! the cruel heartlessness of sin!" H. W. Beecher.

"And is there pardon any more for sin, since sin has done a deed like this? . . . . . Who dare stand beneath the Cross and say that it is hard for sin to be forgiven? Who, in those hours of agony — hours the most sacred and solemn that the world can ever witness — who stood by Him in His agony? Mary might well be there, for she was His mother, and she was sinless; John might well be there, for Jesus loved him for his purity; but Magdalen — she, but a little while ago, had lifted an unblushing brow of sin in the streets of Jerusalem — should such a one as she be there? Oh! dear Jesus, Thou wouldst have it so; and what sinner can hesitate to approach Thee, when he knows that the last look of love from an expiring Saviour was shared alike by Mary the sinless and Mary the sinner!"

Rev. Joseph Farrell.

5. Apostrophe represents, as speaking or spoken to, absent persons or personified objects. It is the strongest of all rhetorical figures, and can be used effectively only

when the imagination of the preacher and the audience soars high above the plane of sober, everyday thought. The greatest pulpit orators have been cautious and sparing in the use of it, yet no other figure is capable of producing such thrilling effect. Its use in ordinary parochial sermons can scarcely be excused from the charge of pretentiousness. Its rarity is one of the sources of its strength.

Example. In the peroration of his sermon on the Fewness of the Elect, Massillon made use of a figure resembling apostrophe in a passage never surpassed for power and sublimity. He imagined the last day and hour of the world had come and Jesus Christ was about to appear in His glory in the midst of the audience to judge them. "Croyez vous," the preacher exclaimed, "qu'il s'y trouvat seulement dix justes? Paroissez: ou etes-vous? Restes d'Israel, passez a la droite . . . O Dieu, ou sont vos elus? et que reste-t-il pour votre partage?" These words produced an instantaneous movement; and the whole audience started to their feet, trembling and panic-stricken, as if judgment were already upon them.

6. Prayer. A fitting climax and conclusion to every moral sermon is a prayer to God the Father through Jesus Christ for strength to carry out the proposed resolution. This prayer should be short, fervent, composed, as far as possible, of Scripture texts, and above all, it should be the natural outgrowth — the crowning grace and perfection of the sermon. When a priest preaches Sunday after Sunday to the same congregation, his own good taste will keep him from the mannerism of ending *all* his sermons with prayer. Yet it must be admitted that such mannerism is but little noticed, when the prayer is manifestly the genuine, spontaneous expression of the preacher's piety and zeal.

The final prayer need not always be a petition for grace; it may some times take the form of a tender, affectionate address to Heaven, revealing sentiments of faith, hope, love, contrition, etc., in keeping with the development of the theme.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Meditation of Theme.

Before we begin to read up matter for our sermon, we have a very important work to do, — a work scarcely ever alluded to by writers on sacred eloquence and seldom done by ordinary preachers. It is the work of thinking out our theme for ourselves, independently of books. Such independent thought is a necessary condition of all scholarly knowledge, and should, therefore, be the foundation of all the knowledge we communicate to our people.

"What do I know of this theme that I intend to speak about? How should it be divided? Can I give a popular explanation of the doctrine it contains? Can I illustrate it? Do I know any texts of Scripture and any facts of Church history that bear on it? What is its practical application to life and conduct? By what motives may it be best enforced?" Meditation of our theme im-

plies the careful study of these questions; it, therefore, requires us to prepare a skeleton sermon, not from external help, but from the knowledge we have already stored up. Of course, we do not preach a sermon so prepared, unless our reading has been so extensive and our memory is so tenacious, that we have at hand within us all the requirements for the exposition and enforcement of our theme, as accurate and complete as they can be found in books. This is rarely the case; hence, the meditation of our theme has usually to be supplemented by full and judicious topical reading.

But the supplemental knowledge for sermons to be drawn from sources outside our own minds is not as much as we ordinarily think, nor is it at all comparable in effective force to that which we derive from the independent study of our theme.

Our Catholic preachers are usually too diffident of their powers — they lean too much on the work of others — in the preparation of their sermons. Yet I am convinced that, with earnest thought on their theme, they could evolve much of the matter that they seek for in books. No doubt,

they should not rely on memory for Scripture texts and doctrinal definitions; but these, after all, form only a very small part of their discourse. The most of it is taken up with illustration and enforcement; and there is no reason why matter for these may not be drawn, at least in part, from the preacher's own store of knowledge, previously acquired from books and experience. If we analyze the sermons of any of those men who have acquired world-wide fame as pulpit orators, we shall find that they were above all things original, that they never culled and retailed other men's thoughts, no matter how beautiful and appropriate, but out of their own treasure brought forth new things and old. It is but false modesty to say that we can never become famous pulpit orators, and therefore need not aim at originality. It is a laudable ambition to aspire to do God's work along the line followed by those who did it best; and that line was undoubtedly in the direction of original, independent meditation of the theme.

Besides, the knowledge gained by this meditation will be communicated to the

audience with very much greater freshness and force than that which is derived from books. The former knowledge we have made our own; therefore it bears the stamp of our individuality, and has for the hearer the interest and inspiring power of a new creation. It may be nothing new in itself, but it is told in a new way — a way in which it has never been told before — hence its charm and power. On the other hand, knowledge taken from books and given out without assimilation or adjustment with knowledge already acquired, has but little vital force in it; it is not realized in the speaker's own mind and heart, and therefore it is not energized with that earnestness and fulness of detail and wealth of illustration that would impress it on the minds and hearts of the audience.

There is no doubt that the meditation of the theme here recommended supposes mental qualities of a high order in the preacher. Concentration of attention, association of ideas, fertility of invention, logical acumen, — all these are required to bring out what latent knowledge there is in him of the doctrine he is about to teach.

In other words, he should be a man of active, fertile, well-trained, and well-disciplined mind.

But mental qualities will profit little without a deep sense of the obligation of using them. Many well equipped minds are too indolent to think out original matter for sermons; they do not see the necessity of it as long as abundance of second-hand matter may with little or no trouble be gathered from books. The consequence is that their preaching is worth just what it costs.

The habit of daily meditation and of spiritual reading for our own good makes it easy to collect original matter for sermons. Indeed, the thoughts and sentiments that we take home to ourselves in prayer are those most easy as well as useful to bring home to others in preaching. But apart from this consideration, meditation is substantially the same process, whether the end be our own or our neighbor's welfare. A priest, then, who gives twenty minutes or half an hour every morning to the consideration of some revealed truth in its bearing on his own life, will find little difficulty in

studying the bearing of that or any other revealed truth on the lives of others.

NOTE. It is questionable if a priest would gain anything by meditating for his own benefit the theme of his sermon. There is too much temptation while so meditating to adapt his reflections and apply his conclusions to others. Such an exercise would be a useful study, but it could scarcely be called an act of personal devotion. It would be much better to think occasionally during the preparation how far he himself is influenced by what he urges on his people.

An hour's meditation on the theme will be amply sufficient to collect and arrange all that the preacher knows about it. The earlier in the week this hour is devoted to the purpose the better will be the result. The order of the questions at the beginning of this chapter should be generally followed in the meditation; and, of course, the thoughts that present themselves ought to be written down. After each note thus taken more or less space should be left to be filled up afterwards from our topical reading.

NOTE. The more carefully and tastefully notes are taken, the more chance they have of being kept for future use. They need not be written in complete sentences; but they should not be so abbreviated, that the reading of them afterwards will present any difficulty. It is not advisable to have separate books for preparatory notes and written sermons. When

but one book is used, reference to the notes is much easier. A thin, well-bound, quarto manuscript will be found the most available.

Young preachers will find their chief difficulty at this stage of their preparation in working out their own division of the theme. Yet the individuality of the sermon is seen in the division more, perhaps, than in any other of its elements. I think that sermons written for practice, as well as those written early on the mission, should have themes so simple, that they could not be divided. Each of them would thus consist of one point only, and with the exposition and enforcement of this twenty minutes could be easily covered. Carpenters serving their apprenticeship are not allowed to spoil wood in attempting elaborate and complicated work: they have to become adepts first in simple, easy constructions. — If our young preachers were subjected or subjected themselves to a similar discipline, there would be fewer exhibitions of crude, amateur work in the pulpit.

I would therefore, recommend young preachers to limit their theme to one point, or head, and to concentrate all their energies on the development of this until they become perfectly familiar with all the forms

of exposition and persuasion. Even when they will have grown older, they will often find it wiser and more useful to confine themselves to one point than to spend their energy and burden their hearers' attention by adhering blindly to the traditional threefold or manifold division. Indeed, the form of exposition given in this work is better adapted to undivided than to divided sermons.

However, there are numerous themes that cannot be adequately treated without division. When a young preacher takes up any of them, he ought to deliberate how to divide it without the aid of sermon books. His first attempts may be crude and unartistic; but they will be his own, and therefore more natural — more in keeping with the rest of his discourse, than those he might borrow from printed sources. Self-reliance will serve him here much more than self-distrust; for, although he should not have the silliness of putting himself on a level with great preachers or even with the writers of sermon books (a lower class altogether), yet he is a better judge than either of these can be of what division is best adapted to the particular audience he

is about to address. The arrangement of a sermon intended for the court of Louis the Fourteenth — though the sermon were preached by Massillon — is not necessarily the arrangement best suited to an Ohio or a Kentucky congregation. Nay more, a zealous pastor without any pretention to eloquence may judge rightly that the division and treatment of a theme found in some favorite American sermon book is not as suitable to his people as that which he himself devises.

Of course, it will sometimes happen that in the books we read for matter we shall come across a better division than the one that has grown out of our meditation of the theme. When this is so, we are plainly obliged to set aside our own for the better form of treatment thus presented to us, as our primary duty in preaching is to confer on our hearers the greatest possible spiritual benefit.

NOTE. As, in listening to a sermon, we can infer from various indications how much careful study was spent in preparing it, so, too, in reading a sermon, it is not difficult to distinguish, at least, broadly, how much of it is the result of original study or meditation, how much, of preparatory or remembered, though not digested, reading. The more eminent the preacher, the

less bookishness in his style and the less book learning in his matter. Sermons abounding in apposite illustrations — similes, analogies, antitheses, etc. — are the work of original thinkers; but those that consist mostly of abstractions and are taken up with *teaching* without any thought of *pleasing* or *moving*, if not the products of metaphysical or unemotional minds, are generally reproductions of unassimilated reading.

The reading of spiritual books, wisely selected, will help very much the meditation of one's theme. It stores the mind with spiritual knowledge, refines and elevates its tone, and kindles in the heart that fervor, enthusiasm, inspiration which every true preacher tries to impart to his hearers. Among ascetical, as well as among literary authors, each of us has a favorite who has a masterful influence over the intellect, feelings and will that none of the others can command. In literature, such domination is often hurtful; but no hurt can be feared in the ascetical life from the most absolute surrender of ourselves to any approved spiritual writer with whose mind and heart ours beat in perfect accord. We should always keep one or other of such works by us, to stimulate us to think or write and to sustain us when we find our attention or energy failing.

CHAPTER XIX.

Reading for Matter.

We have now taken the first important step in the immediate preparation of our sermon; namely, the meditation of our theme with a view to present it adequately to our people. Very few preachers, however, could produce a good sermon from this meditation alone. The definitions would probably fail in clearness and accuracy, and the illustrations, in point and appositeness; while the historical development would in all likelihood be inexact in quotations, unscholarly in exegesis, and vague and uninteresting in the narration of facts. What, then, is the next step to be taken? It is to read for supplemental matter, — for more definite knowledge, for new ideas, for the broader comprehension of our theme that communion with great minds is apt to give us.

The knowledge gathered from books should be absorbed, assimilated, "made our own," before it is imparted to our audience. We stand in the pulpit, not to echo the thoughts of others, no matter how eminent they be; we have a direct message to deliver from our divine Master, and, as faithful servants, we are supposed to have realized its meaning, to be saturated with faith in it, to have made it the guide and rule of our own lives before we enforce it as the guide and rule of the lives of others. This we surely do not do, when we commit to memory and deliver *verbatim* as our own whole passages taken from some great writer or speaker. In ninety nine cases out of a hundred such plagiarized passages are unsuited to the audience to which they are addressed; and instead of being a source of edification, their inconsistency with the rest of the sermon provokes ridicule and contempt. We are, indeed, justified in using the division of our theme made by some eminent preacher, should we have failed in making a suitable division of it by ourselves; but the development of the parts should be all our own. In fact, as

long as we do not preach thoughts that are our own or that we have made our own, we shall never attain any respectable proficiency in the pulpit. We shall have no confidence in ourselves, even in giving simple catechetical instructions. And when we are called upon to speak in public on some subject of local or national importance, we shall either speak the dullest platitudes, or, by utterly breaking down, bring discredit on ourselves and the Church we are supposed to represent.

NOTE. It cannot be denied that good has been done in the past by taking the words of others and delivering them as one's own. Zealous men were in the habit of doing so formerly, because, through stress of persecution, the Church had then to dispense with much necessary learning in her ministers; and many of those called to the care of souls felt themselves imcompetent to prepare and preach original sermons. But those times are past, and with them is past the justification of reproducing the sermons of others. With the opportunities of advanced intellectual culture we possess and in view of the high standard of education among our American people, I say advisedly that no young man should be ordained from our seminaries who is not able to prepare and preach his own sermons.

We may read for matter in two ways: the first is to read some recognized author who has written on the subject of our sermon, and to take notes of all that we find useful to

our purpose. The second is to read only by topics; that is, to read only those passages of an author which will supplement the knowledge we already have of our theme.

The former manner of reading is necessary for those who have little or no knowledge of what they are about to preach. They cannot study the bare theme on which they have to speak, as a school boy studies his lessons for class. They must have at least a general knowledge of the subject to which the theme belongs; and even of the theme itself they must know more than they will impart to their hearers. No one ever teaches efficiently who, besides what he conveys, has not a reserve of intellectual wealth which time or the occasion does not allow him to exhaust. Some will protest that they have no time for so much reading. But they have only themselves to blame that they are obliged to it; for it would not be necessary if they had given a little time every day uniformly to the study of theology and Sacred Scripture. The reading, however, here required is not so great as may at first sight be imagined. The vague knowledge of the subject that remains from

seminary days may easily be made fresh and definite by cursory perusal of the heads of chapters or of a good general index with occasional references to the text. The theme itself will, of course, require more careful and reflective reading, which should not be deferred to the latter part of the week, as the longer the mind has to dwell on the knowledge taken in, the more thoroughly will the ideas be assimilated.

The second way of reading for matter, called the topical, or by topics, is that which is usually adopted by preachers, because, as a rule, they have a sufficiently full knowledge of their subject-matter to dispense them from the wider reading spoken of above. When meditating their theme, however, they generally find that they are doubtful or ignorant of some things belonging to its development, while their knowledge of the rest is sufficiently full and precise. They refer to books, then, for light, not on the subject or the theme, but on those points of the latter about which they are in darkness; and this is reading by topics. Much self-restraint is needed to confine this reading to what is absolutely

necessary. All side issues must be ignored; and all purely speculative questions suggested by the topic, no matter how useful and interesting to ourselves, must be left to after investigation.

Before we begin to read by topics, we should have written out under distinct heads all that we know about the theme. Should our knowledge under any of those heads be incomplete, we should leave place for notes to be taken from books. For this purpose, it will be useful to keep before us the following questions arranged in the order in which the proposition is normally developed. When there are several points, the questions are the same for each.

1. Definition:—
   - Terms to be defined? . . . . .
   - Doctrine to be defined? . . . . .
   - Enumeration of parts? . . . . .
   - Cause and effect? . . . . . .
   - Adjuncts? . . . . . .
   - Properties and accidents? . . . .
2. Illustration:—
   - Examples? . . . . . .
   - Similes? . . . . . .
   - Metaphors? . . . . . .
   - Comparisons? . . . . . .

Contrasts? . . . . . .
Analogies? . . . . . .
Quotations? . . . . . .

3. Historical Development:—
   Sacred Scripture? . . . . . .
   Church History? . . . . . .
   Profane History? . . . . . .
   Recent Occurrences? . . . . .
   Personal Experience? . . . . .
4. Removal of Obstacles:—
   On part of Intellect? . . . . . .
   On part of Will? . . . . . .
5. Motives:—
   Of Attraction, direct (Will)? . . .
   Of Attraction, indirect (Passions)? .
   Of Repulsion, direct (Will)? . . .
   Of Repulsion, indirect (Passions)? .

It is scarcely necessary to remark that all these questions need not be answered in every sermon we write. The preacher must use his own judgment and taste in deciding what matter suggested by them should be developed and what passed over.

NOTE. If any one be disposed to complain of the mental work enjoined in this and the preceding chapter, he should remember that as sacred oratory is one of the fine arts and, indeed, the noblest of them all, no one can hope to become proficient in it unless he make up his mind to spare no labor or drudgery it may demand of him. I know well, there is an impression

among some of us that preaching is "the easiest thing in the world." This would be true enough, if any kind of talking on sacred things in the pulpit were preaching; but it is not so, any more than striking the keys of a piano at random is music, or smearing canvas with ochre is painting.

To reconcile ourselves to the laborious details necessary for efficient preaching, we must love it as an art and, still more, we must reverence it as the instrument by which God's boundless mercy and love are proclaimed to the world, by which innumerable souls are predestined to be saved, and by which the zealous, painstaking preacher himself merits to be crowned with a special glory in eternity.

1. And now as to the books we are to consult. Sacred Scripture, of course holds the first place, as it with Tradition is the fountain-head of divine revelation. The Bible should be at the right hand of every preacher while he is preparing his sermon. But the Bible will not help him much unless he has some means of finding out readily the required texts on whatever subject he is studying. This means is supplied by a Concordance, a work absolutely necessary to every preacher. Another necessary aid to Bible consultation is an

up-to-date commentary, at least on the Gospels and the Epistles. The amount of exegesis done in our seminaries is of necessity too small to be any help in the preparation of a sermon. All that the most competent professor of Scripture can do for his pupils is to inspire them with such a love of the Written Word as will lead them to continue the study of it in after life on the mission. If he does not do this, the time spent in the Scripture class might be, perhaps, better spent on the playground.

2. Theology develops and systematizes the revelation made in Scripture and Tradition. It not only teaches in precise and reliable terms what that revelation is, and when and under what circumstances it was made; but traces its history down to our own day, shows the vicissitudes it has undergone, and defends it by irrefragable arguments against those who inpugn it. Moreover, in one of its branches (Moral Theology), it teaches the principles and laws by which, through our Mediator Jesus Christ, we are guided to our last end, and also the helps (Sacraments, etc.) by which we are enabled to attain it.

From this view of Theology it is manifest

that it ranks in importance next to Sacred Scripture as a source of reliable matter for sermons. We should consult it especially for Scripture texts bearing on our theme, for definitions, for historical development of doctrine, and for the refutation of objections. The compendiums of theology used in seminaries are practically worthless as helps in the preparation of a sermon. Hence every priest should be provided with at least one of the larger works on each branch of the science. He should also have St. Thomas's Summa and never weary of referring to it. It may seem too much to recommend moreover the works written by what may be called specialist theologians on particular subjects, such as the Incarnation, Grace, the Infused Virtues, etc. Yet the help derived from reference to them can scarcely be exaggerated.

3. Church and profane history, the Lives of the Saints, and ascetical works will supply much necessary matter for topical reading. They are particularly useful for the examples they abound in and for the light they throw on the development of doctrine. Still they will not help a preacher much unless he has the habit of reading them apart from the proximate preparation of his

sermon. Even with this habit, he must have a tenacious memory and much mental activity in associating related ideas; else the most extensive and assiduous reading will be of little service to him. Perhaps the best way of making those studies helpful for preaching is to take notes of striking passages, examples, etc., that we find in them; and afterwards to index those notes according to the subjects they illustrate.

4. Plans of sermons, Thesauri Predicatorum, Panoramas, Adjumenta, and all other artificial helps composed to facilitate the preparation of a sermon have no place among the books I would recommend to a young preacher. They may suggest now and again a few good illustrations; but they engender and foster a lazy habit of working; the Scripture texts they give without paraphrase or application are often inappropriate and therefore misleading; their quotations from the Fathers are practically worthless; and their divisions, or points, are generally unsuited to an American audience. For a young preacher, there is undoubtedly much labor and difficulty in working out a sermon independently of these factitious helps; but with each sermon so prepared by him

the work becomes less; the habit of self-reliance — of independence of unnecessary outside help — grows on him day by day; and after a few years he will find that the notes he has accumulated will be fuller and more available for future use than any on the same subjects he can find collected and published to aid him in preparing his sermon.

For several forms of illustration, such as comparison, contrast, metaphor, etc., and for most of the motives to be used, we must rely on the fertility of our own minds, as books will be of no help to us when we are engaged in the actual work of preparation. Most live preachers are on the alert to find illustrations and motives for their sermons in everything they read and in the ordinary happenings of their daily lives. All true artists and all earnest professional men do the same, each in his special line of work; and they do it spontaneously, without effort or forethought, because they are true and earnest and have their hearts in what they do. Were we Catholic priests to imitate them, our illustrations would be very much more luminous and interesting than they are, and our motives more powerful to move the feelings and the will.

CHAPTER XX.

Arrangement and Composition.

Little needs to be said here about the arrangement of matter in a sermon, because according to the plan I have recommended the preacher has before him what may be called a stereotyped outline which he fills up by meditation and topical reading. Hence, the matter is no sooner found than it is arranged in its proper place. As to the order of arguments, about which writers on oratory are so much divided, the question does not affect us, as in an ordinary sermon to a Catholic audience we should not use formal arguments. We should explain the origin and development of revealed truth, but we should not prove it. If it be asked, however, in what order several texts bearing on our theme should be cited and explained, I answer that the clearest, most forcible, and most applicable should be taken first, then the others should be given incidentally and *in globo*.

NOTE. When a doctrine like the Blessed Eucharist is revealed in the Epistles as well as in the Gospels, the texts are to be quoted and explained in the order of time.

In the development of each point, exposition should insensibly grow into persuasion, and for this purpose suitable motives should be adduced. Those motives should become more and more impassioned as we proceed from point to point, and hence be arranged as far as possible in the form of a climax.

Young preachers ought to write their sermons and commit them to memory. This is a laborious work, and leaves little time for recreation, at least for the first year after ordination. Hence many shirk it, confident that they will not break down, and that their sermons will not be worse than those they usually hear. They have no generous aspirations to make them better; and they do not reflect that a dry, soulless sermon from one who has grown old in the ministry is less of an anomaly than a similar sermon from a young priest, whose soul, fresh from the consecrating hands of his bishop, is supposed to be aglow and vibrating with the Spirit of God who has descended upon it. Those young men go into the

pulpit, as some one wittily remarked, with nothing to say — and they say it. This is not the place to *preach* to them; but I must say, that their seminary training was an utter failure, if their conscience does not upraid them severely for such careless execution of their divine Master's work.

In regard to the writing and memorizing of sermons, three periods in the life of a priest may, I think, be distinguished: the period of writing and memorizing; the period of writing without memorizing; and the period of careful, minute preparation without the one or the other. The first of these should last until a complete course of sermons and instructions has been written, or, at the very least, during the first two or three years on the mission, until the young preacher has become perfectly familiar with the form of a sermon, has learned to answer under the heads of definition, illustration, historical development, refutation, and persuasion the different questions given in a preceding chapter, and, lastly, has acquired such self-possession and command of language that he will be practically safe from the danger of useless digressions, of inac-

curacy of expression, or, worst of all, of utter failure of memory. I think it is arbitrary and unjustifiable to say, as some do, that this period should extend over the first five years on the mission. Many young priests may with advantage enter on the second period after their second or third year in the ministry.

The second period covers the interval during which we still continue to write our sermons, without, however, committing them to memory. This period will confirm us in the habit of clear, logical thinking, and it will also give us greater facility in writing idiomatic English. Another advantage to be derived from it will be an easy, natural flow of speech, mostly divested of that rigidity of form that can hardly ever be entirely removed from written composition. The duration of this period can scarcely be determined; but for a preacher of average abilities I think one year should be sufficient to derive from it all the advantages I have mentioned.

The third and last period dispenses with writing and memorizing a sermon, but it does not dispense with its careful and min-

ute preparation. The text, the definite object, the proposition, the plan and division, must be distinctly determined and written out. Then the exposition of each point by definition, illustration, etc., as well as the motives to be urged, have to be considered, not vaguely and summarily, but singly and thoroughly as if we were actually writing the sermon. It is advisable to take notes of the thoughts and sentiments that occur to us in the course of this preparation; as, if we do not, we are apt to forget in the heat of delivery some of our most effective passages and to be led from the main course of development into prolix digressions, from which the return is both awkward and difficult.

In this third period, a preacher has to express his thoughts and sentiments in words that come to him in the moment of delivery, without study or premeditation. Hence he must have a ready and copious supply of appropriate language; the art of composition must be like a second nature to him; he must be self-possessed, even when he is most animated; and he must have such a clear idea of the development of his theme,

that no thought or sentiment connected with it will be forgotten.

It may be objected that so much reading and writing seem superfluous to a priest several years on the mission, especially as he has written so many sermons that his ideas have now begun to run in grooves out of which no amount of preparation will take them. In reply, I admit that every priest is liable to fall into those grooves, or mannerisms, in the latter years of his life. Not only will his gestures, the pose of his body, and the modulation of his voice be the same, Sunday after Sunday; but there will be in all his sermons a uniform mode of definition, division, illustration, etc. Such sameness, being the expression of the preacher's individuality, cannot be avoided; and it will scarcely be observed, if he be earnest and conscientious in his preparation. He will realize too vividly the truths he announces, and he will be too much impressed with the duty of bringing them home to the heart and conscience of his audience, to be satisfied with giving them, no matter how often repeated, in the same stale, hackneyed, stereotyped form. Truths

grow in the mind of every earnest thinker, —they are not today what they were yesterday; and this is especially true of religious truth which meditation keeps developing and maturing in the soul all through life. Hence, as the doctrine preached a year ago will present itself in a fuller light and with a deeper meaning to the earnest preacher who meditates on it for next Sunday's sermon, so, too, will he present it with greater freshness, clearness and profundity to his people. It is true that no substantial change can be made in his definitions; but his development of them will be fuller, more lucid, more dense with suggestive thought. His illustrations also will be more copious and pointed; his quotations from Sacred Scripture, history and experience will be more ample and vivid; and, lastly, his motives, as arrows sped by a stronger hand, will be more certain to attain their object.

In the third period of a preacher's life, then, the preparatory work ought to be as minute and painstaking as in the other periods, although no formal composition or memorizing is required. Age has a tendency to lower our ideals and to make us satisfied

with perfunctory work. Hence, priests grown old on the mission, to counteract such tendency, must meditate often on the terrible, mysterious truth, that on the apostolic earnestness of their preaching and their preparation for preaching, the salvation of many souls may virtually depend. No doubt, the full, clear, resonant voice of young manhood becomes in time weak and unmusical; the luxuriant imagery of earlier sermons gives place later on to plain, unembellished speech; likes and dislikes, love and hatred, courage, endurance, ambition, — all the feelings, or passions, in a word, grow cold and dull-edged with the waning of life, and a corresponding change is visible in the matter and form of our sermons. But with due preparation, there is an impressiveness — a persuasive force in the calm, simple, earnest preaching of a priest grown gray in the faithful service of his Master that no youthful eloquence can command.

NOTE. The question is sometimes asked, is it permissible, or even advisable, to preach extempore? The answer depends on the meaning we attach to the word *extempore*. If it mean "without preparation," no writer, as far as I know, has ever sanctioned such preaching; but if it mean "with due study of matter

and arrangement, without writing," then the solution of the question is easily determined by what has been laid down in the preceding paragraphs.

Besides the Sunday sermon, a priest has often to speak informally to sodalities, school children, etc. On such occasions, whether he be young or old, he should study and arrange what he has to say. He need not, indeed, write it out, much less memorize it; but reverence for the Word he announces, as well as respect for his hearers and himself, forbids him as the representative of his divine Master to speak on sacred things in a desultory manner. An ambassador, acting officially, ought never appear in deshabille.

The practice of composition, begun in the preparatory seminary, should be enforced as part of the curriculum through the whole after course of the clerical student. I know this is not done in many seminaries, in which, nevertheless, *Hebrew* is made compulsory. The consequence is, that the habit of writing with ease is lost by disuse; and the young theologian, when he has to write a sermon toward the end of his course, suffers acute torture in doing a work which he should find easy and pleasant.

NOTE. I do not ignore the necessity of a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek for the critical study of the Bible; but I maintain that for all missionary priests the knowledge of the vernacular is much more necessary. We should strive for proficiency in both branches of knowledge; but if one must be neglected, it certainly should not be the latter.

The following practical hints on the composition of a sermon may be of some use to young preachers.

1. Begin to write only when you have studied your theme thoroughly, and have acquired a full, clear and distinct knowledge of what you are going to write.

2. Many young writers cannot easily determine how to begin. If they had once started, they think they would write fluently; but the difficulty with them is how to start. Let them imagine themselves in the pulpit at the point of their sermon with which they begin to write, — say the proposition. What would they say? Some words will surely occur to them, and in all likelihood they are the best to begin with. Another plan of starting for such writers is to be indifferent about the first sentence or two and to write on with the intention of changing or correcting afterwards, if necessary. Their minds are thus relieved of the

burden of reflecting on the propriety of every word they use, and they can give their undivided energy to the plain, unaffected expression of their thoughts and sentiments.

NOTE. I may mention here that the less we think of the rules of grammar and rhetoric while writing, the better we shall write. Unless purity of diction and force and elegance of style come naturally and, as I may say, spontaneously to us from previous training, no amount of correction at the time of writing will secure them.

3. Make no effort to write fine language. If your thought be beautiful, simplicity of expression will make it more beautiful still —will be its best setting. Balanced phrases and clauses and all artificial sentence-forms have scarcely any place in oratory, whether sacred or profane. Under fine writing, however, I do not include figurative language, in which genuine passion finds its natural expression.

4. Keep in mind that a sermon is essentially a conciliatory, persuasive discourse. If you are a young preacher, your composition is apt to be abstract and didactic — a theological essay rather than a popular address. While you write, therefore, ask yourself frequently: Will the people understand this presentment of the theme? Will it

interest them? Will it stimulate them? Will it dispose them toward the definite object I have in view? Remember that the oratorical instinct should lead you to write or say, not what appears most beautiful or impressive in itself, but what will appear such to the audience you address.

5. When you find it hard to make your exposition or enforcement of some truth or duty simple and interesting, imagine yourself trying to bring it home to the most ignorant, dull-witted member of your parish, as you sit face to face with him in your library. Write down every word you would say to him, every repetition you would make to bring your ideas more thoroughly home to him, every difficulty of the understanding, every repugnance of the will you would remove from him, every motive of action you would urge on him. Write all this, and your sermon will be as complete, as popular, as successful as it is in your power to make it. Your eager determination to convince and persuade him will make you anxious about the ideas and sentiments you convey, but not about the words in which you convey them. These will come spontaneously

from your trained power of expression; and they will be all the more simple and forcible, for not being studied or even thought of apart from the knowledge they convey.

6. Sermons composed at odds and ends of time can scarcely ever be well written. The soul must be at white heat before it can infuse itself into any work it undertakes; and time and thought and feeling are required to bring it to that ardent state. Hence I should recommend that not less than an hour's sitting should be given to the composition of a sermon until it is finished.

7. It will sometimes occur that a priest, beginning to write his sermon, will find his mind so clouded and torpid, that he can scarcely put two ideas together, much less give adequate expression to a consecutive line of thought. Some would advise him not to write until such darkness and inertness pass away. Their advice may be useful for amateurs, but cannot be acted on by one whose time for preparing his sermons is limited. His best way for rising above those clouds that sometimes settle on the soul is to read some book that will have a stimulating, inspiring effect on him—a book

that will set him thinking, that will suggest to him noble, beautiful thoughts. Let him read a page or two of such a book; and he must be very dull indeed if, after doing so, he will not find himself able if not impelled to begin to write. Everyone of any literary culture will know what books have the most stimulating effect on him; and he will do well to keep one or more of them by him.

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